

**OKEFORD FITZPAINE  
Project Team  
Village Hall Project Report**

## **1) Introduction**

The Project Team was formed, following the Parish Council's approval at the meeting on the 6th March this year.

The Team members were Andrew Vickers, Jeremy Gartside and Ian Berry. Sally Faraday has also kindly provided assistance.

The agreed aims were

- To undertake a project to determine the long term suitability of the Village Hall, to take account of the new planned housing developments which will bring an increase in the Village's population. The intention will be to ensure that we have a suitable facility that will take us through to the next Century
- To undertake all necessary research to determine the main options for the future of the hall
- To present a report to the Parish Council for their consideration. This report would detail the action taken, the results obtained and provide background information and comment relating to each of the main options identified.

The village is presently subject of several large scale planning applications which, if approved, would generate a considerable amount of Sec 106 monies.

It was essential to undertake a survey in order to find out what people in the community thought about the current hall, whether it could be used for activities in addition to those already taking place, and if any structural changes or improvements were needed.

It was noted that despite this project being undertaken with the Council's support, it is understood that the Village Hall Trustees, managers, of the Hall on behalf of the community, want to go ahead with building an extension to the current Hall, despite the fact that the Parish Council voted not to provide funding for this from the Section 106 money generated by The Old Dairy development. It would seem sensible to delay any such work until the Council has examined this report and decided how to proceed. The Team therefore decided to submit a report made up of 2 main sections:

1. The results of the Survey; and
2. A possible Vision for the Future, which would detail the key Options identified by the Team.

The Parish Council confirmed that the Project Team was only undertaking research on behalf of the Parish Council who will make the decision as what to do about the recommendation presented by the Project Team.

## **2) What have we done?**

a. We met with the Village Hall Committee and explained what we were going to do to gather information – particular reference was made to a Hall Survey to be undertaken within the Parish. We asked for any ideas regarding the future uses of the hall and received several suggestions.

b. We visited 3 other villages where their halls had been replaced by a new construction or were in the throes of replacing their current hall – Charlton Marshall, Stourpaine and Morden. We spoke to some very helpful people, who had spent a lot of time researching the numerous options available, and had obtained considerable support from their communities. They stressed that this was important, whether or not new buildings were required. A wide variety of supportive sources for planning and fund-raising issues were provided, as well as details of numerous available funding sources.

c. We met with one developer, involved with the Pleydell's Farm site development . Contact has been attempted with the developer for the Chicken Farm site but nothing of note has been forthcoming. It was decided at an early stage that any further contact with developers would not be appropriate, as clearly there would be a great deal to be discussed and agreed with each developer, and this was not within the Team's remit.

d. A survey was undertaken to find out what the Parish community thought about the current use of the Hall, and its potential for a wider range of activities. The Village Hall Committee were asked for their views on the Survey before it was sent out to the community, but regrettably they decided not to be involved and advised the Parish Council that they were not interested in the initiative. The

### **3) Visits to Other Villages.**

**The key issues stated as important by the people we spoke to, stressed :**

- To plan any changes, to take account of shortcomings that emerged from their surveys;
- A single useable space needed to be supplemented by separate meeting, committee etc .rooms
- A focal point such as a proper stage together with changing etc. facilities.
- The largest space should be able to cater for numerous indoor pursuits such as table tennis, badminton, indoor football, functions, musical events, plays and many others.
- Eco friendly heating etc. systems.
- Wi fi and modern audio systems..
- Any village hall needed to be suitable for **all** ages and should cater for the **current and future** needs of the community, otherwise interest and usage would fall away as the years passed.
- You can't have enough storage.

### **4) Survey responses.**

Many thanks to those members of the community who did respond. It was unfortunate that the first distribution of the Survey in the Blackmore Vale magazine was severely affected by a delivery failure. The Survey had to be reprinted and delivered by hand, which meant that everything was delayed, although every household did then receive a copy to complete. Copies could also be downloaded from the Parish Council and the Fippenny News websites.

It must be stressed that the Survey was **not a vote for change or no change**. Any decision for a change would have to be undertaken by the Parish Council and not the Project Team.

The responses and comments have been produced in Part 1 to this report. It is however important to emphasise that the numbers represent responses which were provided in the 123 completed surveys received out of total of 439 forms that were delivered.

The responses received represented an 28% of the total forms delivered in the Parish. Therefore around 72% of the households did not submit completed forms.

The responses provided valuable information about the possible use of a Hall for additional activities, as well as identifying the need for improvements and changes to the Hall.

### **5) Why was it necessary to identify a Vision for the hall's future?**

a. The information gathered from those who responded could not be taken as the general view of the village, as less than 30% of the total number of survey forms distributed were completed.

b. Only a few of those who responded considered the great opportunities for the village that could be funded by the obligatory contributions that the developers of the various housing projects would have to make to the community, known as Section 106 money.

c. A key factor in considering a number of different options to improve the hall facilities was the availability of Section 106 money. This latest Section 106 money together with the residue from the

Old Dairy development, and the potential sale of the current Village Hall site, could provide a considerable amount of money which has to be used for the benefit of the community.

d. The development of the current Village Hall site opens a great opportunity to look at possible schemes ranging from social housing to a retirement facility.

e. The Project undertaken by the Team has identified the great possibilities for the village to create a superb facility for current and future generations. The Team therefore considered that they should identify the Options for consideration by the Community.

## **6) Conclusion**

- The community has a great opportunity, probably one that may never come around again, to extend, revamp or build a new hall which will be fit for current needs and for those in the next Hundred years to come.
- What will the community do with such a large amount of money, if it is not spent on a large building project?
- There is of course also the real danger of losing this money if we do not use it, especially with the formation of the new Dorset local authority set up. The sooner this money is earmarked, the safer it should be.

## **OPTIONS AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Clearly this is a substantial amount of money that may never be available again. It therefore seemed sensible to conclude that a large community project that would benefit the community could be a considerably improved or a completely new Village Hall.

There are currently no other obvious projects that would benefit from such a large amount of money, especially as the Parish Council has had experienced some difficulty in deciding how to spend the Section 106 money derived from the Old Dairy development.

The Team were very much aware that a lot of time, effort and money had been put in by past and present members of the community in building and maintaining the current Hall. However In identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each Option, it is must be stressed that there is no criticism nor lack of respect for the efforts of all those who created a hall that was fit for purpose in the era that it was built.

Time has now passed and the village's needs have changed over the years. It is important to ensure that every effort is now made to ensure that we have a building that will serve the current and future generations, and will attract people to live in the village.

6 Options have been identified, and are detailed on the following pages.

### **OPTION 1. RETAIN THE CURRENT HALL IN ITS PRESENT STATE**

#### **ADVANTAGES**

No cost involved

No disruption

Good accessibility on foot

Maintain current uses and functions

#### **DISADVANTAGES**

Parking is limited

Poor accessibility by car - not centrally placed in an expanding village

No attractive outside leisure/social area

Not suited to expand use of facilities and No stage or focal point

No separate committee/meeting room, limited internal space.

Insufficient and inconvenient storage arrangements.

Kitchen not fit for larger functions.

No wi fi or computer compatible tv/audio facilities.

Little opportunity to improve the hall without major refurbishment.

No use of Sec 106 money.

### **OPTION 2. EXTEND AND IMPROVE THE CURRENT HALL**

#### **ADVANTAGES**

Good accessibility on foot.

Improved rental income.

Partial use of Sec 106 money

Church car parking retained.

#### **DISADVANTAGES**

Reduced accessibility through loss of parking space.

No attractive outside leisure area.

Disruption with no facility to honour bookings during works.

Greater noise disturbance to residents in adjacent surrounding houses.

Need to maintain existing footpath.

### **OPTION 3. DEMOLISH CURRENT HALL AND REPLACE WITH NEW BUILDING ON SAME SITE**

#### **ADVANTAGES**

Broadly the same as option 2 above

Services in place.

#### **DISADVANTAGES**

Broadly the same as option 2 above

Re jiggling of current footprint would impact on car parking.

Potential restrictions in conservation area.

#### **OPTION 4. DEMOLISH CURRENT HALL AND REPLACE WITH NEW BUILD ON BOWEY FIELD.**

##### **ADVANTAGES**

Land owned by the Parish Council

Good accessibility on foot and close to the geographical centre of the village.

Good vehicle access by road

Improved rental opportunities

Total use of Sec 106 money

Opportunity to build an appropriate, purpose built facility for current and future use.

Very attractive setting, outlook and leisure/ social area opportunity.

Opportunity to build a retirement complex or similar for people to downsize & stay in the village.

Current hall maintained until new one built.

##### **DISADVANTAGES**

Loss of attractive views and disturbance to a few households.

Possible problems with vehicle access through either creating an entry off Lower St, or agreement with owner of current access alongside children's play area.

All utilities would need to be laid.

Loss of some playing field area, though extensive facilities on Castle La.

Loss of car parking for church goers

#### **OPTION 5 DEMOLISH CURRENT HALL BUILD A NEW HALL/SPORTS COMPLEX TO REPLACE THE PAVILION CASTLE LANE.**

##### **ADVANTAGES**

The sale of the current hall site together with Sec 106 money could pay for the entire build.

Good access by vehicle.

Large car park in place.

Utilities already laid.

Improved rental opportunities.

Opportunity to create purpose built facility for current and future use.

Very attractive venue, outlook and potential leisure/social area.

##### **DISADVANTAGES**

Poor pedestrian access. This can be improved by upgrading current f/path from Ridouts and acquiring part, or access over, field opposite Castle Cottage.

Loss of parking for church goers

Not in the geographical centre of the village.

Encouragement of greater use of sports facilities.

Current hall could be retained until built.

Very little disturbance to neighbours due to peripheral location.

Potential to use Greenhayes for retirement complex for those wishing to downsize, but stay in the village.

## **OPTION 6 RETAIN THE CURRENT HALL AND BUILD A NEW PAVILION/SPORTS COMPLEX ON THE CASTLE LANE SITE.**

### **ADVANTAGES**

Sec 106 money could pay for large part of the build.

Good vehicular access.

Good car parking.

Potential for greater rental opportunities dependant on spaces available.

Very attractive setting and outlook and potential leisure/social area.

Very little disturbance to neighbours due to peripheral location.

Encouragement of greater use of sports facilities in a wider range of sports with modern changing/showers potential indoor sports for all ages/abilities.

Utilities already in place.

### **DISADVANTAGES**

Poor pedestrian access. This can be improved by upgrading the current f/path from Ridouts and acquiring part, or access over field opposite Castle Cottage.

Potential competition with Village Hall for rental income/bookings.

**The Project Team offers the above six options for consideration by the Parish Council. The Team hopes that their report will help the Parish Councillors make informed decisions on uses for the large amounts of money which will be made available to the village through Sec106 payments following the planned developments within the village in the near future. The judicious use of this money will affect the whole community of Okeford Fitzpaine for the foreseeable future.**