

**Parish Rooms Refurbishment Working Party (PRWP)  
Fact Finding Visit to Mareham-le-Fen Community Centre**

## **Notes**

Wednesday 28th June 2023 at 7.00 pm

### **1 Present**

Lynette Corten-Miller Chair Chris Parker, Philip and Sue Maddison, Jenny Caitlin, Sarah Boulton and Sheridan, plus Ruth from Tennis Club Committee - meeting Graham Beacham, Trustee.

### **2 Intro**

Mareham Le Fen Community Centre has a comprehensive website for full information. In brief, it is a thriving self funding organisation. Run by a charity with Trustees independent of the Parish Council. Like us they had a village hall in use for almost 100 years which was no longer fit for purpose. They made successful bids including to the Lottery. The project came in at £25k for the land and under £700k for the building. The population was 944 at the 2011 census and new housing is being developed.

### **3 Setting**

The first thing you notice is the lovely setting surrounded by green space and next to the church. The grounds are maintained by the Trustees. There is an outdoor wildlife pond with a decking area. The building has a simple outdoor verandah and grassed seating area. You come into a foyer with notice boards, meeting room, a large hall, toilets and disabled toilet off it. There are several meeting rooms, a good sized storage room, separate bar area with roller hatch, well equipped kitchen with roller hatch, all stainless steel furniture, island and easy access. The kitchen achieved a five star rating on their recent food safety inspection.

### **4 Main Hall**

The main hall is 5 x 9 metres, spacious and light. It has underfloor central heating fed by an LPG tank in the grounds. It has acoustic panels fitted to the walls and ceiling. It has sockets in the ceiling so could take a digital projector for film nights or a lighting rig for performances. There is a modular stage and bookshelves on wheels for community book and dvd lending. There is a large storage room off with plenty of chairs, rectangular tables and round function tables stacked on trolleys for ease of moving them. Access to the bar area is by way of electric folding doors. The Bar is fully stocked and equipped with a roller hatch. They are fully licensed and generate income. There are several pieces on the walls from the old village hall. Memorials to local people who served in the war. It is licensed for 200 people and seats 180 people comfortably.

### **5 Activities**

The usual array of village activities takes place including jazzercise, pilates, watercolour, bingo, taekwondo, table tennis, WI, garden club, lunch club, Tuesday Club and private hires for parties and weddings. The Parish Council holds its meetings there and the Lincs Spinners and Weavers Guild use it for their meetings. There is a gap between the activities people say they would like to see happen and people coming forward to run those activities.

## **6 Process**

The Parish Council set up a separate organisation to progress the new build. It took some years from first airing concerns about the old Village Hall in 2001 to the new build which opened in 2018. They conducted surveys of villagers and the majority wanted a new Community Centre. The Trustees held on to this aim in the difficult years it took to progress. They got planning permission. Successfully applied for funding bids from various sources including Lottery and WREN, now FCC Community Foundation. They used professional funding bid organisations to assist them.

## **7 Covid**

Covid has changed people's attitudes. Older people are hesitant to come out in the daytime although they want the connection with others. People are more reluctant to come out at night. This has affected the user groups which are now re-establishing themselves after the pandemic.

## **8 Learning Points**

### **8.1 Planning**

It would have been ideal if the Community Centre could have had large doors opening onto the field between themselves and the Church. Ease of access from church to the hall would have been helpful for wedding, christening and funeral gatherings. This was not possible due to planning considerations backing onto people's homes. The Trustees are now considering a sun lounge on that side.

**Pay attention to what planning says early in the dream and design process.**

### **8.2 Acoustics**

Their acoustic engineer's role was to assess noise level of extractor fans etc. When there is a large space (main hall) full of people acoustics are problematic. There was quite an echo which the later addition of the acoustic panels at a cost of £7k has reduced. It was 4.7 down to 1.1.

**Pay attention to the acoustics of people in a large space at the dream and design stage.**

### **8.3 Sports**

The hall can accommodate badminton as it has a high ceiling and short mat bowls. It has the mats for the bowls. Neither activity has taken place in the centre to date. How could it be known that those activities would not, so far, happen? This may apply to other suggestions.

**Pay attention to survey results requesting sports/activity need evidence of intent.**

### **8.4 Storage**

One of their meeting rooms is absolutely full with storage items.

**Pay attention to having sufficient storage space.**

#### 8.5 Environmental issues

2018 is now a lifetime away; it was pre covid and pre heating crisis. The LPG costs about £1200 per year to run the heating and that could be cheaper with ground source heat pump and /or solar panels. The building can get very hot and they are prohibited from opening the fire door in the main hall.

**Pay attention to utility costs and consider air/ground source heat pump and or air con.**

#### 8.6 Funding

However exciting it is to be successful in getting a grant the roll out must be planned. Some grants were unable to be spent in a short timescale. They had to be repaid and reapplied for.

**Pay attention to the small print of spending within the stated time limits.**

### 9 Resistance to Change

Perhaps it is a natural response for some people to resist change. Some are vocal in their opposition. This can have a negative impact on people working on the project.

**Focus on the end goal, keep positive, resilient and persevere in the face of adversity.**

### 10 Costs

The main hall is £13.50 per hour and the smaller room is £11.50 per hour. They are not the most expensive and not the cheapest. They employ a cleaner and all caretaking, grass cutting etc is done by the T3rustees. The Community Centre depends on the hard working efforts of its Trustees and Volunteers. They are pleased to welcome a new trustee with marketing skills.

### 11 What makes it all worthwhile

People enjoying using the Community Centre. New groups coming to the centre. The fact there is a place for whatever people would like to do in future.

Lynette thanked Graham for hosting us, we learnt a lot, it was useful, interesting and informative.

the end