

Parish Hall Meeting - 21st March 2016, 7.30pm West Woodburn

Committee Members Present: Pete Saunders (Chair), Anne Pender, Hugo Remnant, Margaret Bolam (Bookings Secretary), George Dent.

Corsenside Parish Council (CPC): Carl Hamilton (Chair), Dot Carrington (Vice Chair), Caroline Currie, Andrew Harding, Karen Traill (Clerk, minute taking)

Members of the public excluding above: 19

Opening Remarks & Discussion

PS welcomed all and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. PS informed all that within the Parish notice of this meeting had been advertised on all 3 notice boards, fliers had been delivered to each household and for those further afield the date had been given in articles in the Valley Redes and the Hexham Courant.

PS then opened discussions by asking whether Corsenside still needs or has use for a parish hall. Members of the public responded by stating that the parish needed a focal point and if there was not a parish hall where would the community go instead? PS stated that in order to continue the parish hall needed a viable business plan as currently there was not enough usage, income from hall hire only covered 50% of total annual running costs which was on average £1500.

Q: Around 10 years ago the parish had a similar meeting and one of the queries then was who actually owed the land, was it Corsenside Parish Council?

A: PS explained that the hall, and the land upon which it sits, is owned by the parish. The Parish Council is the guardian trustee and holds the freehold on behalf of the parish. The Parish Hall Management Committee manages the hall on behalf of the Parish Council and the wider parish. As the Management Committee is a registered charity, it is overseen by the Charities Commission.

A comment was made that it would be sad if there was no parish hall, a link which supports the community much like the church, shop and school. It was a concern that this could start a worrying trend for other local facilities.

Q: How many events have been held in the last year?

A: About 12. Income for the year was around £700, including the hire of tables and chairs.

Q: What business can we attract in?

A: There have been many different events held over the years however there has been insufficient interest for the majority of these events, with occasionally fewer people attending than volunteers running the event.

Q: How many years can the hall stay open for with its current finances?

A: At the current rate of usage closure is imminent. To keep the hall open, all windows and doors would need replacing. The kitchen also needs attention in order to bring it up to current health & safety standards. This would cost in excess of the current reserves.

It was stated by a member of the public that the structural issues were obvious to all however it was the

finality of selling the land that caused great concern. In future, the parish may realise that it needs a meeting place.

The Committee explained that if people wanted to keep the hall open they needed to volunteer to help to run it. Current committee members feel like they have tried everything, but are now trapped in their roles as others are not prepared to take over. Some of the older members are no longer physically up to the role they currently perform.

Q. The current kitchen is not suitable for catering, how much would a replacement cost?

A. The rotting kitchen window is the main cause of damp within the kitchen. This leaking window would need to be replaced, along with the water-damaged units, which would cost several thousand pounds. To carry out these replacement works now, without a clear business plan in place would be a case of throwing good money after bad. A plan for increasing future usage needs to be in place before more money can be spent.

Q. Is any funding available from the windfarms?

A. Yes there is the option to apply however funding is generally only available if it can first be proven that the hall is being used. Funders will not provide grants unless they are confident that it will be of benefit. The hall was refused funding from the National Lottery for this reason. Funding from the new windfarm will not be available until 2017.

CH outlined the reality of the situation; whilst it would be desperately sad to lose the Hall, the Committee has worked tirelessly to try and improve usage over the years, but there has not been enough support.

Q: If the land was sold would there be enough money left over after demolishing costs to buy new land?

A: Any proposal for a new hall would need to be backed up by a strong business plan in order to secure grant funding.

A comment was made that other villages use their village halls because they have had work done and are friendly places; Corsenside Parish Hall is old, tired and unfriendly. It was suggested that our village does not appear to have the same community spirit as other local villages. People need to support the hall if they want to see it continue.

Q: What is to be decided, does the parish hall need support, ideas or new members?

A: New members with a new business plan or to get the go ahead from the community to sell it.

JC stated that he would be happy to have a go at a short term plan if members were about to create a long term plan. We could try to raise the yearly shortfall.

HR stated that there was a lot of feeling that closure was final and it need not be. HR believed that keeping the current hall was not the way forward due to the structure, parking, location etc. He felt that if people did feel strongly about having a hall, then perhaps the way to get community spirit back would be to close the hall and get the whole community involved fund-raising for a new one.

Q: Where would you put a new one?

A: The community could decide.

In the past a piece of land was offered so it is possible that there are other options out there.

GD felt that the community needed the current hall to make money. If the hall was gone there would be no facility to make money for a new one.

AP stated that she did not believe the hall would be missed as people do not use it. AP pointed out that the majority of those in attendance consisted mainly of the older generation, very few younger parishioners had turned up. AP stated that the long term future of the hall depended largely on the younger ones using it. AP questioned whether it was worth keeping the hall open when few appeared interested, was there any point spending money on improving the hall when it appeared that there was no long term future.

The point was made that out of a Parish of 400 residents there were only a total of 29 in attendance including the committee members, Councillors and the minute-taker. A local resident who is new to the area stated that he was shocked at the lack of support. They had moved here to be a part of a community and to be actively involved in the community.

Conclusion

The hall is infrequently used making it almost impossible to attract funding to make the necessary repairs. Current income does not cover costs of annual upkeep. The Hall Committee has tried putting on a variety of events to entertain & generate income however these have not proved popular. In order for the hall to continue to operate, there is a clear need to identify dedicated volunteers to join the Committee and to secure support from the wider parish to attend events at the hall. PS pointed out the Hall Management Committee AGM would be held in May. If a Committee could not be identified at the AGM with a clear plan for taking the hall into the future, then the present Committee would have no other option than to close the Hall and to begin the process of selling the land to establish a local Trust Fund, operating within the Committee's charitable objectives. PS informed all that there would be a list at the front for people to put their names on if they were interested in attending, or forming part of this new Committee. Four names were put down. Anyone who would like more information or would like to join the Parish Hall Committee please contact the Chair Pete Saunders at corsenside@hotmail.co.uk .

CH outlined the Parish's gratitude to the current Committee for the years of service that they have put in to keeping the hall operating.

The Parish Hall AGM will be held on Monday the 23rd of May at 7.30pm in the hall.