MINUTES OF COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN THE ADDISON V.C ROOM ON 16th JUNE 2015

PRESENT: Cllrs. Veitch (in the Chair), Bunyan, Fermor, Hall, Hartley, Kemp, Rook and Beryl Bancroft.

APOLOGIES: David Summers.

The Chairman read out the following statement:

Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying: `
Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

No interests were declared.

1/15: Election of Vice Chairman:
Cllr. Veitch proposed that Cllr. Rook should remain as Vice Chairman for this Committee, this was seconded by Cllr. Hartley and agreed.

2/15: Committee Meeting Times:
Several Members raised a concern that for those working full time or with other commitments the current scheduled meeting time of 2p.m. was not very convenient. Cllr. Veitch reminded Members that due consideration of the Clerk's time was necessary as they already had a heavy workload and any evening meeting would dilute the time they were in the office during the day. She suggested it may be possible to amend the time to either the beginning of the day or later in the afternoon. She asked all present to give their preference of a time, the majority appearing to favour first thing in the morning. Cllr. Veitch proposed the meeting remain as the third Tuesday of the month with the time being amended to 9a.m; this was seconded by Cllr. Rook and agreed with one Member abstaining from the vote.

3/15: Planning Application:
Cllr. Veitch tabled notes she had made of a meeting held on 13th May at Tunbridge Wells Town Hall chaired by Ruth Chambers as filed with these Minutes. At the meeting Ruth Chambers remarked at her surprise at the current thinking regarding libraries. There was no longer a requirement for them to be 'quiet spaces' and they were encouraged to be incorporated in multi-use buildings where a greater footfall was expected. Margaret Parker – KCC Highways and Transportation, had raised concerns regarding access to the site by large vehicles and insisted that no vehicles reversing across the public footpath would be acceptable. Cllr Rook tabled revised plans to overcome this issue. David Scully – Ecology Officer, suggested that any wildlife (namely one slow worm) affected by the build could be relocated to the Crane Valley Nature Reserve where they could be monitored by TWBC. Alan Legg – TWBC Planning department, thought the current design on the table could be award winning. We had also been asked to look at additional car parking spaces and Cllr. Rook is in the process of looking at possible suggestions where they could be located.

Cllr. Kemp asked if the Jockey Lane car park had ever been considered as a site for the Community Centre as in his opinion the topography of the site made it imminently suitable. Cllr. Veitch stated that all suitable sites had been identified in the Urban Practitioner Report. Cllr. Rook mentioned the opposition from local residents to the youth centre/library site had been immense and that any community building in that area was likely to attract similar opposition. Cllr. Veitch commented that the big advantage of the current site was its central location and a lot of thought had already gone into the decision.

Cllr Kemp thought that the NPPF 20112 should be reinvestigated, it was useful in focusing minds on the old buildings in the centre of Cranbrook and we should be considering adaption of existing assets. Cllr. Hall thought we already had adequate community facilities that could be utilised such as High Weald Academy, Cllr. Veitch pointed out that along with the Queens Hall, there were too many restrictions on when the halls would be available for use by the wider community.

Cllr. Kemp felt the Business Plan needed further tweaking to ensure it is 'solid' as there is a risk of economic harm to Cranbrook if other opportunities are not explored and full advantage should be taken of all the expertise that was now sitting around this table. Beryl Bancroft expressed her frustration that we were wasting time going over ground that had already been covered before.

For the benefit of the new Members Cllr. Veitch offered to meet up at a mutually convenient time for all and update them on the history of the project, how, why and what decisions had been reached to date.

A discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of putting in a single application including Cranbrook Engineering site as suggested by Jane Lynch was explored. Members felt there was little or no advantage to the Parish Council

4/15: Access Permission:
The Draft Heads of Terms for the Regal Car Park access permission had been filed with the Community Centre Committee Meeting Minutes of 21st April 2015, the Co-Op were happy to progress the negotiations once approval for planning permission was granted.

5/15: Loan Poll:
Cllr. Veitch reiterated that we needed to conduct a poll before we could consider borrowing any money for the project, the planners at TWBC had indicated they wanted to see results of the poll before permission was granted and fund raising from alternative sources would be impossible before we had secured planning approval.

Cllr. Veitch tabled the revised draft poll document that had been prepared by Cllr. Franks, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes. In his covering email Cllr. Franks had raised a concern whether costings were accurate and doubt existed that sufficient funds could be raised. The document and email were discussed at length. Cllr. Hartley agreed with this sentiment and felt that the current costings were in his opinion underestimated and it would be reckless to contemplate moving forward with this project based on the current figures. Cllr. Veitch confirmed that the figures we were relying on had been supplied by a Quantity Surveyor, an expert in the field. Cllr. Rook commented that the figures we had been given were comparable to other recently built community centres of a similar size so there was no reason to doubt what we had been given.

Cllr. Veitch confirmed that as a Parish Council, legally we could not start building until we had the funds in place to complete it, and when it came to looking at how much we may need to borrow we would have fixed price contracts in front of us.

In response to a question from a Member Cllr. Veitch stated she would be happy to consider sending out the poll to a pilot group in the first instance and would seek advice from Cllr. Franks on how the group could be identified. Cllr. Hall stated she was unconvinced that parishioners wanted a Community Centre, she did not think the amount of people that attended the consultation and exhibition and had bothered to respond was significant enough.

6/15: Fundraising:
Once fundraising was underway, Cllr. Veitch said she would be looking for volunteers to examine specific areas. She had looked into the costs involved in hiring a professional fundraiser. An experienced fundraiser could cost up to £1000 per day, a less experienced one would still cost between £300 and £700 per day. She had come to the conclusion that the most cost effective and efficient way would be for volunteers to undertake the work with guidance from a professional.

Cllr. Veitch informed the Committee that she was now in receipt of a charity number - 1162158, for the charity she had set up in her late husband's name to supply funds to benefit the parishioners of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. A mandate exists for the charity to manage the Community Centre if it is decided this would be the best option. It is not exclusively for the Community Centre it exists to support projects that benefit parishioners. It currently has four trustees – a family member, the Chairman of the Parish Council, a representative from the Church and a resident of Cranbrook. It may be the case that the Parish Council can use the charity to take advantage of VAT regulations; currently HMRC gives concessions to public authorities however these concessions are not consistent and have been identified as illegal under European Law. She confirmed that the current cost plan excludes VAT.

7/15: Items for Information:
No items were raised.

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 21st July at 9.00am.