

The future of Jubilee Hall - Proposals from DCC for WR & LCA and West Rainton Parish Council consideration (Report to be presented by Janet Tayler, Secretary WR&LCA)

Report for consideration at Parish Council Meeting 21/12/17

Background

As you will be aware, WR&LCA has debt issues (current value slightly in excess of £100,000) dating back to the refurbishment of the Hall in 2011.

The debts were originally much larger but owing to a positive revenue income there has been a reduction of a minimum of £10,000 each year. It is hoped that by 2024 all debts will have been repaid.

The Association has sought help from DCC on numerous occasions regarding the Community Chest Fund from which we have so far received only £3,846.05, as historically, when residents of the village were asked how the £300,000 should be allocated, the consensus was that £100,000 should be given to the Association. DCC maintain that they can not release any funds to pay off debts directly.

While the debt situation persists it is impossible to apply for grant funding to continue the refurbishment to rebuild the frontage etc which would provide amongst other things, an upstairs gym area which would enable the gym equipment to be relocated from the bar, thereby permitting the use of that area for meetings, catering events and more bar usage

Not surprisingly, new Trustees and volunteers are impossible to recruit. Currently we have no Treasurer, the Bookings Manager has returned to full time work, ill health has reduced the involvement of one Trustee, and currently most of the responsibility and workload falls to the one paid employee (our cleaner), and three Trustees/volunteers.

The Hall continues to be well-used and generates income but needs an input of both personnel and funds to secure its' future.

I have been contacted recently by both Cllr David Hall (early Nov) and John Murphy AAP, who I met with on 14th November. Craig Morgan who is John Murphy's replacement at the AAP was also present at the meeting I had with John.

Below is the record of the meeting, which was sent to me by John Murphy.

1. DCC is not in a position to provide public money to WRCA to pay off its debt but does not want the community to lose what is a valued asset.
2. In order to reduce the loan and liabilities faced by WRCA we propose that a transfer of Jubilee Hall (owned by WRCA) to the Parish Council would be supported by DCC. The purchase would facilitate the repayment of most of the debts owed by WRCA thereby greatly reducing the personal liabilities of trustees and those acting as trustees at the time the debt was accrued.
3. So as to facilitate, WRCA will seek advice and approach the Parish with a view to see if the Parish is willing to take ownership of the Hall from WRCA.
4. If this is acceptable to both parties then a purchase price would need to be agreed. The valuation is likely to be determined by the DCC assets survey which valued the building between £65K and £85K depending on a quick or protracted sale. It is anticipated that the higher end would be an acceptable purchase price.
5. Such an application must be with DCC (Craig Morgan – Durham AAP Coordinator) with the PC as the applicant before March 31st 2018, and if acceptable then DCC will

ask the local grant panel to convene and consider using money from the WR Capital Pot to be allocated to the PC in order to purchase the Hall.

6. If such a proposal is not with DCC by March 31st 2018, or any proposal submitted is rejected by DCC/the local grant panel then DCC will announce a new bidding round for the capital pot in April 2018. If after such a proposal falls and a new bidding round is arrived at, WRCA will be eligible to submit further proposals but will be in competition with other applicants.

The DCC proposals also included that a Community Incorporated Organisation (social enterprise) should thereafter be established and assume control of the running of the Jubilee Hall. The WR&LCA Charity would likely cease to exist once the transaction had been completed. They further suggest that the balance of Community Chest funds (circa £27,000) be used to engage a full time Community Worker who would manage the Jubilee Hall, or be used for running costs for several years.

This proposal came as a 'bolt out of the blue'. WR&LCA could 'plod on' for the next 8 or 9 years until the debt is paid off with a dwindling number of volunteers in the hope that no major repairs are needed on the Hall during that time, but ill health, or a change in circumstances could lead to insufficient personnel being available to keep the Hall open.

With the help of the PC a group of interested residents could be put together to consider the proposal from DCC and take it forward, and I think this represents the only chance there is of securing the future of the Hall and injecting new life into it.

Janet Tayler,
Secretary West Rainton and Leamside Community Association
December 2017