

Annual Statutory meeting of the Council

Monday 13th May 2019

Agenda item 23.0

TO CONSIDER PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE COMMITTEE WITH THE PROPOSED EXTENSION

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Ridgewood Village Hall, located on New Road in Uckfield is owned by Uckfield Town Council but leased out on a long-term full repairing lease to the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee for a term of 25 years.
- 1.2 The current lease was signed in April 2010, so we are nearly nine years into the term of the agreement, which is due to end in April 2035. Ridgewood Village Hall Committee pay an annual rent of £120.00 plus insurance costs, in the region of £650.00.
- 1.3 To accommodate the increase in population in the Ridgewood area with the development of 1,000 new homes in the next five to ten years, and to improve the existing facilities available within the hall, the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee plan to build an extension and refurbish the building. Outline planning permission has been granted for these works by the local planning authority (Wealden District Council), and drawings prepared.
- 1.4 A great deal of time and work has gone into finding suitable funding sources for these works and the Village Hall Committee have made contact with a number of local businesses including the developer Taylor Wimpey to see if they can support the project. They are also delivering a fundraising plan, with numerous activities and events booked in over the next couple of years.
- 1.5 At the meeting of Full Council in February 2019, members were advised that the improvements planned for the Village Hall were estimated to cost in the region of £300k – the external shell in the region of £220k of this amount. The Ridgewood Village Hall Committee have made progress with fundraising, seeking the support of local businesses and exploring the various grant funding opportunities available to them. Developers, Taylor Wimpey have offered to pay for the kitchen. The Village Hall Committee have sourced a supplier for the bricks for the build. They have liaised with Thorne's Civil Engineering Contractors who have offered to assist with the foundations. They have also arranged for the heating to be supplied and paid for.
- 1.6 As a result of Ridgewood Village Hall Committee not being in full ownership of the building, it has been suggested by some funding providers that match funding would also be sought by the owner of the property, or a longer-term lease would be required to enable the Committee to secure capital funding.
- 1.7 The Chair of Ridgewood Village Hall Committee therefore asked if the Town Council could consider whether they could provide any financial support to the works. A sum of £49,000 had previously been allocated in the Town Council's earmarked reserves for improvements to Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park, but this

is the only form of capital funding set aside for this area at present.

- 1.8 Members requested in February that the Town Clerk should explore the options available to the Town Council:

FC.104.02.19 It was **RESOLVED** to request the Town Clerk to explore the options available to the Town Council in terms of whether it would be able to contribute towards the proposed extension and building alterations drawn up by the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee.

2.0 Considering the options available

- 2.1 S106 developer contributions – a question was asked at the February meeting about whether any developer contributions were expected to be released for local infrastructure from the Ridgewood Farm development.

Unfortunately all the S106 monies from the Ridgewood Farm site are earmarked (*at the time the agreement was signed*) towards specific projects including highway schemes etc, which unfortunately does not include village hall upgrades.

- 2.2 Public Works Loan – the Public Works Loan Board is a statutory body that issues loans to local authorities, and other specified bodies, from the National Loans Fund, operating within a policy framework set by the HM Treasury. This scheme typically has a lower interest rate and is mainly used for capital projects by parish/town, district/borough and county councils. Uckfield Town Council has borrowed from the Public Works Loan Board on a number of occasions in previous years for large capital projects, and monies are still being paid towards these loans. The total amount outstanding as at 31st March 2019 was £594,600.00 which is made up of four loans; two for smaller sums ending in 2022, and two for larger sums not due to end until 2039 and 2057 and are gradually being paid off. It is therefore unlikely that the Town Council would wish to borrow further funds from the Public Works Loan Board until the amount outstanding has reduced.
- 2.3 Capital Project Grant Funding - the main grant provider nationally for large scale capital projects is the National Lottery – with different schemes available such as community funding or heritage funding. It was therefore thought best to explore this route. Since the February meeting, the Town Clerk attended a meeting arranged by the Chair of the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee and a representative of the National Lottery regarding their National Lottery Community Fund scheme.

The project would align with the criteria of the National Lottery Community Fund in terms of places and spaces, but it was recommended that if the National Lottery were to consider part or full funding the build (in the region of £200k), then they would be keen to see that funding was secured to carry out the internal works of the project. Ridgewood Village Hall Committee would also need to make a compelling case in terms of the impact of the rebuild/extension and how it meets local need and specific groups and communities. At present, we believe that the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee has in the region of £50k secured towards the project. If successful, the project would need to start in six months of the organisation being informed that it had been successful. The application process can take a number of months to work through – the National Lottery Community Fund request initial key information, a business plan and project plan for the build, to understand the scope of the project at this initial stage. Then independent groups of people working for the National Lottery review this initial information, before requesting further details and ask further questions throughout the process

to determine whether they would be able to assist.

- 2.4 If successful with the lottery bid for funding, this would provide security to the Village Hall Committee with their proposed improvements and extension of the hall. In order to submit the application, Ridgewood Village Hall Committee need to provide evidence that they have secured funding to cover the costs of the internal works and improvements.
- 2.5 Looking at the options available to the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee and, following the Town Clerk's consideration of the Town Council's position, the only way in which the Town Council could currently assist, would be to reallocate/retitle the earmarked reserves set aside for the 'Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park' to a more wider brief of 'Ridgewood Village Hall improvements.'

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) note the above report;
- (ii) consider whether the Town Council wishes to broaden the scope of the Town Council's earmarked reserves set aside (£49,000) for Ridgewood Village Hall Car Park, to 'Ridgewood Village Hall Improvements,' and;
- (iii) decide whether Full Council wishes the General Purposes Committee to consider at its next meeting on 20th May 2019, the legalities and position of the Town Council, in extending the current terms of the lease agreement between Uckfield Town Council and the Ridgewood Village Hall Committee.

Appendices: Appendix A: Ridgewood Village Hall Business Plan
 Appendix B: Ridgewood Village Hall Case for Support

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