

WVHMC TRUSTEES REPORT

The following recommendation put forward to the AGM is unanimously supported by the Committee.

that the site in School Lane should be sold and the net proceeds split equally between two initiatives

the enhancement of the nave of Great Wigborough Church to make it more suitable for use as a community venue

supporting the re-development of Peldon Village Hall to create a co-owned and shared community centre to be known as the Peldon and Wigboroughs Community Centre.

On completion of the above the existing Wigboroughs Village Hall charity will be closed and a new charity will be created for the new shared community centre.

We have confirmed with the Wigboroughs Parochial Church Council a range of appropriate improvements which they would like to make to the nave given dedicated funding and have agreed in principle a formula with Peldon Village Hall Management Committee defining the terms of co-ownership and control of the new Community Centre. The agreement with Peldon Village Hall Committee includes guaranteed Wigboroughs representation on the new charity's Management Committee, the right of veto for the Wigboroughs on fundamental decisions affecting the Community Centre and terms for the return of money to the Wigboroughs in the event of the Peldon site one day being sold and the villages wishing to go their separate ways.

The Governing Document of the charity allows for the resulting capital from the sale of the hall to be used to purchase land or another Village Hall or to be used for other charitable purposes or objects for the benefit of the inhabitants. The purchase of land would not materially change the current situation as regards the Charity's assets and, as this Report describes, the acquisition of a dedicated Wigboroughs Village Hall was not supported in resident surveys or by trustees.

Residents were asked three times about what they wanted to do about the old hall - informally before the Management Committee was re-established in 2011 and then in more detailed surveys in 2014 and 2015. The two initiatives were mentioned from the beginning and were clearly and strongly favoured in the two later surveys. Details of the surveys/questionnaires are available on the Parish Council website www.winstred100.org

Some residents felt that the best option would be to do nothing. Continuing to do nothing goes against the aims stated in our Governing Document. Leaving a derelict hall is not an option.

It was also suggested that doing nothing held open the opportunity to reconsider options if the population of the Wigboroughs increased significantly. Colchester Borough Council's Planning Department has classified the Wigboroughs as non-sustainable, meaning that there will be no future significant development. The Wigboroughs is a small community with limited infrastructure and so it will stay.

Another suggestion was to build a new hall somewhere in the Wigboroughs. The Committee's concerns about this option centred around the perceived appetite of the community for such an approach, the cost of building a hall, the availability of land on which to build it, the likely usage of the hall and therefore its viability in terms of generating enough income to cover its maintenance costs. The trustees did not want to set in train a repeat of the history of the current hall, especially as the nave of the church offers a suitable alternative venue for some events.

A number of residents felt passionately that efforts should be made to build a new hall or some kind of community facility on land donated from one of two sources. Most residents when consulted did not support the approach, several commenting that they could not see how such a unit would be viable. The trustees discussed usage and costings issues with managers of other local halls and with the Rural Community Council of Essex's village hall specialist, who confirmed that very few communities with an existing hall let it fall into complete dereliction and then were able to resurrect it. The trustees did not feel that they could responsibly recommend using the proceeds of selling the original hall to maintain a new hall for possibly several years, even if one could be built, in the hope that it would eventually become self-supporting. They agreed with residents who suggested that a more viable option was to use the nave of Great Wigborough church which was already being used for events organised by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the Friends of the Wigboroughs (a charity no longer in existence). The nave could be used for certain community events although it could not accommodate the full range of activities normally associated with a dedicated village hall, but which a new hall at Peldon could accommodate.

The trustees were also influenced by the history of the community and its hall. The hall, acquired in 1954, and anecdotally well used in its early years, required grants, loans (never repaid) and donations to undertake significant refurbishment in 1980/82. From 1988/89 and in several individual years before that running costs exceeded income.

There were few bookings after that time and the hall was last hired in financial year 1991/92. Following failed attempts in the 90s to acquire a new hall the trustees of the charity stopped meeting without, apparently, residents holding them to account. Only eight people, from an estimated adult population of 200, volunteered to be involved when efforts to re-establish the Charity's Management Committee were begun in 2010. By that time the charity had assets at the bank of only £54.63. In the meantime, residents had made use of other local village halls, predominantly the Peldon hall.

Another option discussed, offered to the community for comment but not pursued, was to establish an investment fund which would hold the proceeds of the sale and provide from its interest funding for events or good causes until such time as suitable use for the capital should be identified. The proposal was not well supported during consultation and the trustees felt that it did not fit with the intentions of the original trust. Nor did it satisfy the conditions applied to the outline Planning Permission granted on the School Lane site which is conditional on the sale money being used for one or both of the two projects favoured by residents.

Informally raised options were to build a community room extension to Great Wigborough church and an appeal to keep all the money in the Wigboroughs. The former was not supported by the PCC and the latter, although it had a number of passionate supporters, was difficult to satisfy in a way which complied with the Governing Document.

In the 2011 and 2014 resident consultations there were opportunities to suggest other initiatives which could be considered. Very few people took up this option and none of the suggestions was deemed appropriate or viable.

To summarise, among the residents who chose to engage with the process either formally or informally, there were a number of strongly held and differing opinions. After long and difficult consideration and consultations with residents and others the trustees believe that this recommendation offers to as many residents as possible some or all of their preferred options.

We believe that the recommendation provides the best impact from realisation of the charity's only asset and maximises the opportunities for residents to have access to benefits in the spirit of the Governing Document.