

MINUTES OF AN INFORMAL MEETING HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL ON 15 JANUARY 2014 AT 8pm TO DISCUSS ARRANGEMENTS TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF 'THE JUNCTION' AT CLAPHAM.

The meeting was opened by Jeff Klückers who proposed Haydn Smith as Chair of the meeting. This was agreed.

An Attendance sheet was sent around the room for all to sign, there being some 42 persons present.

Appointment of minute secretary. The Chair proposed Jane Kluckers – agreed with thanks.

Apologies received from Jane Preston, Sian and Peter Smith, Sally and John Morris, Caroline and Cliff Tompkins, Steve Setchell, Mia Cartwright.

Haydn Smith gave a brief background to the store and previous Post Office and other uses. The current meeting came about not least because of required changes to the building, which were likely to be necessary should the current planning application be granted.

Neil Austine then outlined the current position. He said there appears to be a need and a want for The Junction to remain in the village, and it has been left to him to update it as he is the current lessee. He added that hindering the success of the business are the building and its repair, lack of inside toilet, heating and parking provision. In addition, the lack of a postmaster's salary, has had an adverse effect on overall revenue. The current building was donated by Travis Perkins in about 1988 so there has previously been community input, but now it is not wholly fit for purpose.

Jeff Klückers said to the meeting that he assumed that most people in the room appear to have a vested interest in a positive outcome. The body of the meeting appeared to agree with this statement.

Questions from the floor followed.

Kate asked about the form of a new building. Neil said that he envisaged that the building, if possible, would be slightly larger, but he wouldn't want to see many more covers, but more shop goods. Jayne later commented that normal business need not be interrupted, for example a building could be fabricated elsewhere and erected on the site within days.

Jonty asked about parking. Neil said that the perception from outside the village was that there was never anywhere to park therefore people didn't bother to use the facilities. Jonty suggested other areas in the village that may be good for parking, for example the church yard. Kate later said that she thought we were over-emphasising the parking issue – there were plenty of other places.

Richard suggested a questionnaire around the village to assess demand for a new facility, and assess the business need for the shop. In addition, he suggested diversity in the business i.e. educational would be looked on favourably by funders. The say so of the trustees of the recreation ground would be needed because they have to be 100 per cent

behind the project, and a long period of time may be needed to raise the funding. The theme of diversity was echoed later in the meeting by Kate.

A question was raised over whether the existing building would last much longer and it appeared that it would , if necessary.

Deborah (local councillor) mentioned about planning permission timescales. Which were likely to be three years.

Richard said that in his experience schemes go wrong if funding runs out, so we need to have all monies available before planning goes in.

Questions were raised by Kath and Eddie as to why the previous planning permission had been withdrawn. Neil explained that it was due to a line being drawn in the wrong place on the submitted plans.

Comments were made from the floor concerning the nature of any new building if all of the above happens. It was felt that the building would attract outside customers if it was sustainable/unusual . Mike referred to a straw bale construction - this would bring people in. Lynne later mentioned that other areas had used log cabins, and Keith felt this was a possibility.

Neil replied that whatever is done it would have to be what the village wants and gave examples of other sustainable businesses/buildings within the County.

Eddie asked whether funding or grants were available. Neil is aware of different funding bodies and the whole matter would need detailed investigation.

Tony asked whether we are getting ahead of ourselves, when we need to address the current issues, i.e. trustees satisfied, toilet issue resolved, and also whether planners would allow any changes without adequate parking.

Jayne was keen to emphasize that the shop and café is much more than that, it's a village community centre, and this makes it unique and may be a selling point, if trying to renew the building although in her view it will never be a huge money spinner.

Eddie pointed out it still has to be a viable business. Heidi noted that so many people are losing their village shops and this affects many areas such as house prices and community spirit. It was also suggested that disabled parking should be a priority.

Tina mentioned that people looking to buy houses in the village are attracted by the fact that it has a shop.

Giles asked about using volunteers to staff the shop. Neil was not in favour of this, and others mentioned that it was good that he was employing local people.

Also mentioned again was the idea of a questionnaire- if done promptly it might lend weight to the planning application, Haydn said this would probably hold no sway with the planners at this stage people would need to submit their own comments as soon as possible.

Tina said that we need to support the shop by buying just a few things there, and encouraging people to eat there also means that they'll buy provisions.

Jeff asked the floor whether The Junction is in the right location? General consensus was yes. Gerry said the PO re located to the village hall at one stage and it didn't work. Trade wasn't gained and there were problems of usage with the hall. Giles said that it was useful to have play area by the shop too.

Rob said who is now using The Junction – i.e. not all locals, therefore any questionnaire needs to be very well worded. Most patrons are local according to Neil. Cyclists, walkers, contractors tend to make up the other visitors.

Jeff wanted to clarify the fact that the building will be owned by the community? This will be looked at and options kept open.

Keith as a trustee of the land said we need to think about a few aspects of the lease. Land must only be used for the benefit of the locals. Neil's leased areas can only be used for a shop and tearoom as specified in the current lease. Parking is prohibited and it is not permitted to park on the land. The trustees have no money to change this lease, so any funds raised may have to go towards modifying this part of the lease. Trustees cannot give advice and Keith was only here as an observer. He felt it unlikely that Arun will help out because of funding issues at the moment.

Jane(Jones) said that the School was very supportive of the project in general but they don't get the benefit of the playing field.

Haydn moved the meeting on by suggesting there needed to be some form of steering committee and a group to look at legal and business aspects, a supporters group, etc. This might start off with a group that would begin to raise funds.

Jeff asked what figure we're thinking of, Haydn said it could be anywhere between £50K-200K for a new provision.

Tina said she would see if there any TV programmes that might be interested in becoming involved in the project.

The next step would be to have a formal inaugural meeting, to set up a constitution, open up a bank account etc. in order that the project moves forward in the correct way.

Rounding off the meeting, Haydn suggested a date of Wednesday 12 th March for the next meeting, by then hopefully we would have items to vote on and be able to commence with setting up the appropriate groups.

Jeff proposed a vote of thanks to the Village hall Committee for allowing free use of the meeting room.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

