

Joint Buckden Parish Council & Village Hall Trust liaison meeting

Thursday 21st November NOTES plus additional information re new relationship between BPC and VHT following the VHT becoming a CIO

Attendees: Matt Beldam, Cynthia Alers, Caroline Underwood, Peter Clark

Apologies None

Notes from last meeting

Majority of actions completed there were two outstanding actions:

- Matt will follow up on leaflet about hearing aid apps
- Caroline will report on Gt Shelford when the visit takes place

It was noted that Ray Magness the Tree Warden was very helpful. BPC now retain HDC for their tree management. CU will send on HDC contact for BVHT to investigate using them in the future.

Terrorism Bill implications for BVHT and BPC

This was discussed and it was agreed that no action was required by either the BPC or the VHT, as any such responses would be led by District and County Council. The BVHT may have restricted their numbers to 199 if 200 participants trigger the requirements of the bill in its present form, but the bill is still working its way through consultation. ACRE are advocating to raise the 200 limit.

FYI the BPC did start to develop a Community Emergency Plan but it did not get finalised. This has now been shared with the Chair for his information.

Progress on CIO

It is now clear from the information received from the BVHT solicitors that there is no requirement for a Custodian Trustee once the asset transfer to the BVHT's CIO is complete. It was agreed PC and CU would report on the information received from the BVHT's solicitors at the next BPC meeting, and the Clerk will be asked to file the letter with the BPC minutes for future reference. The Hall Manager will also keep the information on file. The BPC will no longer have any role in signing leases or any other administrative role on the running of the Village Hall once the asset transfer completes and the CIO structure is final.

Key information from Joseph Hobbins Solicitor HCR Hewitsons, Lancaster House

Notes from email between VHT and HCR Hewitsons confirming new status and responsibilities of VHT as a CIO and BPC as formally Custodian Trustee. 21.11.24

As a CIO, are we now allowed to hold the property in our own name? What happens if the CIO becomes insolvent, or more likely, not quorate? Would the assets revert to the Parish Council or to the Charity Commission who then take steps to reform the Trust?

Yes – the CIO can hold the property in its own name. In the event of the CIO's insolvency, the deed conveying the property will need to be followed as well as the dissolution clause of the CIO. Once the assets are in the name of the CIO, the assets would not transfer to the Parish Council (unless the PC has any interest in the property which we are not aware of).

Does it mean that the Parish Council will no longer be our custodian trustee and will not need to co-sign leases?

That is correct – the Parish Council will no longer be Custodian Trustee (once the property is transferred to the CIO)

When we are a CIO, does the Custodian Trustee (i.e., the Parish Council) still need to co-sign leases and contracts? What exactly did we transfer as the Parish Council still will hold in future a limited guarantee?

Once the property is transferred to the CIO, there is no need for the Parish Council to be Custodian Trustee. As a CIO is a legal entity, it can hold property in its own name. For unincorporated charities, there is no legal entity – meaning that the trustees would need to hold the property in their own (personal) names – or a custodian trustee. Therefore a custodian trustee is present in cases where an entity cannot hold property in its own name. The CIO holding the property on trust for its original purposes means that the CIO will ensure that the property is still used for the purpose which the property was conveyed to the charity for (i.e. the usage). The property will still be in the CIO's name.

The issues of the possibility that there might not be enough Trustees to run the VH or the organisation running out of funds were discussed. It was agreed that regular liaison between the two organisations means that both parties are aware of the any developing situation and will, if required, call a public meeting to ensure that the valuable asset of the hall is retained in the village. The fact that the Trust has regular meetings and reports its finances transparently is part of the mitigation of such an eventuality.

ACTION Take information on to BPC and BVHT PC/CU and MB/CA

Electrical recycling container

The VHT agreed to the siting of the electric waste bin by the recycling area in the carpark. CA was concerned that people might put in items other than electrical items (i.e. clothing) which might cause a problem This will need to be monitored.

ACTION CU to inform Village Maintenance Committee

Update on youth activities and infra structure, working with the Village Club

CU updated the group on the work with VH Club to set up a youth membership. It was noted the refurbishment of the toilets was part of the support for that. Also the BPC was arranging for safeguarding training for the Club to help mitigate any issues that might arise through a youth membership scheme. Safeguarding training will also be provided for the BPC and the BVHT staff and trustees will be invited to attend

ACTION CU to share information on Safeguarding training

Updates from VHT

After receiving a £15,000 grant from PECT to improve energy efficiency, the Trustees have installed new LED lighting which will result in a reduction of electricity consumption of 70% (savings passed on to tenants), and also require less maintenance. The grant is also being used to increase loft and roof insulation to modern day standards.

The BVHT was recently left a legacy donation. The Trustees decided to use these funds for refurbishment of the soft furnishings in the main hall to maintain its status as a desirable conference venue. New chairs have also been ordered.

BVHT is also working with cricket agents on a “no win, no commission” basis to submit a funding request to add solar panels on the pavilion roof and a refurbishment of changing rooms.

An insurance survey of the full BVHT estate was undertaken in October. Due to an historical anomaly, only the main hall is insured for full reinstatement value. The tennis and bowls clubs insured themselves which is improper. All buildings will now be included on the insurance policy for full reinstatement cost.

Updates from BPC

Revision of BPC's Neighbourhood Plan is currently being undertaken

Hub activities are taking off, which is pleasing, but BPC will monitor how this demand will be managed going forward.

Regular meetings with neighbouring Parish Councils have been planned to discuss matters of mutual interest. To date, the meetings have been very productive in sharing experience and best practice.

Budget planning for next year is underway. The grant request from the Playgroup was discussed, and BVHT confirmed that the Playgroup had not approached the Trustees for support and that the recent tax changes would probably have a material effect on the Playgroup's finances. It was noted that if the playgroup does not continue, then commercial providers could be invited to use the premises as demand for childcare services appear to be strong, with Buckden Nursery at capacity. CU to find out details.

ACTION CU to send on information if required

Biodiversity measures and plans for Village Hall

CA has been doing a lot of work on this. The Hall is one of 10 sites selected by HDC to qualify for a grant of £8k for biodiversity enhancement in the Valley. The Head of Biodiversity (Nick Massey) at HDC is keen to come to present to BPC to share HDC's vision to enhance biodiversity in the region, as well to discuss the upcoming statutory requirement for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to publish legally binding Local Nature Recovery Strategies (“LNRS”) in spring 2025. CA to connect Nick Massey and BPC's Clerk who will take this forward after discussing with PC and CU. Cllr Madeline Fraser needs to be involved in this, as biodiversity is swiftly becoming a key strategy for HDC and CPCA. There could be wider opportunities for Buckden, including involving the Towers and other parts of the village. There are a number of grants to which we could apply to fund this work.

ACTION CA/CU/PC to contact HDC

The BVHT has been considering joining the Biodiversity Net Gain scheme where developers can buy their biodiversity net gain units but there would need to be a survey cost £2.5k to establish the baseline biodiversity and c. £6k to develop a 30-year master plan for a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. The LPA will also charge an undetermined monitoring fee, estimated at £10k to £25k. This is a new market which has just launched, so market prices and sight of financial visibility is still limited. Given the upfront costs and the uncertain prices of credits, a financial business case is difficult to construct at this preliminary stage.

ACTION CA to file a no-obligation expression of interest with HDC's LPA and monitor developments.

BVHT also keen on improving the biodiversity in around the building and grounds through green infrastructure strategies, e.g., SUDs and green walls were just two examples. It was agreed that the BPC Climate Change group could support with these initiatives.

ACTION CU to link up Madeline and Cynthia

Date of next meeting

6th March 2024 7.00pm 8 High Street Buckden

DRAFT