

The Future of Jubilee Hall - Update Report

Background

At its meeting held 16 July 2020, the Parish Council considered a report from the working group set up to consider the proposal that the Parish Council apply for grant funding, from the remaining £112K community chest funding held by DCC, to purchase the Hall from the Community Association (CA) and then set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation to run it.

The Parish Council decided that it could not support the proposal as there was no sustainable business case for the Parish Council to do so. There was also the complication of a charitable asset being sold to a non charitable body. At that time it was demonstrated that the most appropriate body to help secure the future of the Hall was not the Parish Council, but was in fact, with better support and stronger management, the existing charity.

Our 2 County Councillors, the Community Association and the Durham County's AAP co-ordinator were advised of this decision, and the reasons for it, and it was stressed that the Parish Council hoped that the £112K grant funding available could remain earmarked to support the existing charity and/ or the Hall in some other way.

Recent Developments

Since July 2020 a great deal of work has been undertaken to look at other potential options. As a result, a proposal was subsequently made that Durham Area Youth (DAY) an existing charity that provides services from the Hall, could apply for grant funding to purchase the Hall and to run it going forward, directly in the interim with the potential to form a new community led Charitable Incorporated Organisation to run it in the future. Work began on considering and developing this proposal during 2020 resulting in a grant application being submitted to DCC by Cllr Hall on behalf of DAY in September 2022.

As the grant funding available was the remaining Community Chest Funding, the West Rainton Community Chest Panel had to be reconvened by DCC to consider and approve the grant application. As Chair of the Parish Council I was invited to be a member of this panel which met on the 21st December for this purpose. Other members on the panel in attendance were our 2 local ward members, Cllr Kellett and Cllr Hall, a Village Partnership Representative (VP) , in lieu of the Chair of the Partnership due to a conflict of interest as the Chair of the VP is also the Chief Executive of DAY, the AAP Co-ordinator and a DCC Economic Development Officer. As Cllr Hall is also a DAY trustee, his conflict of interest was duly noted and he was only in attendance to answer any questions on the application and supporting papers.

After detailed consideration of the proposal, the application was approved by the Panel. Following approval, legal work will commence to progress the sale with both existing charities undertaking due diligence around the transfer and charity law compliance. A public meeting is also planned by DAY and the CA to inform residents about the transfer and the winding up of the CA and DAY intend to carry out a community wide consultation exercise on future usage to drive forward any changes that the community want to see.

Cllr Wallage, January 2023

