

Progress Update (1) on the Longstanton Community HUB Project

A year and a half ago, in November 2015, Longstanton Parish Council (LPC) carried out a parish-wide survey to review the state of existing community assets and seek guidance on future direction. This was circulated to all 1,500+ households in the village. The response was an endorsement to build a brand new Community HUB on the Recreation Ground (REC) replacing the existing Pavilion (currently on the REC) and also replace the existing Village Institute (on the High Street). The existing Village Institute would then be sold to help raise funds to build the new HUB. The purpose of this first progress update is to bring you up to date on the first 18 months of the HUB Project.

The Briefing for Architects was to redevelop the existing Pavilion site on the REC into a new multi-use village hall as a Community HUB for Longstanton incorporating the following features:

- Café and external terrace overlooking the playing fields, bowling green and tennis courts
- Large hall suitable for badminton and other indoor sports, but able to be divided for smaller group activities
- sports changing rooms (potentially 4 of) to Sports England requirements along with referee facilities
- Large function room for both community events and to be hired out e.g. for birthday parties, wedding receptions, etc.
- Club room and offices, including a LPC office and HUB Manager's office
- Storage facilities for groups using the HUB regularly
- Sufficient on-site parking to accommodate a fully occupied HUB

Some principles were set out to guide the design of the HUB. Firstly, it is to be flexible to cope with as wide a range of community activities as possible, allowing optimal utilisation of the HUB. Secondly, it is to be eco-friendly so that it will be more self-sufficient in energy and water and not a drain on the environment. Thirdly, it should have a good Internet connection for fast web access by all HUB users. There will also be a number of computer/internet terminals available for community use. Fourthly, consideration should be given to specific requirements for clubs and groups using existing REC and Village Institute facilities to smooth their transfer to the HUB. Fifthly, we want to ensure full access for all members of the community, both able and disabled. Lastly, it is planned to have a Library Access Point from which books can be borrowed.

The HUB Project is ambitious and quite complex and involves more than just building a new multi-functional Community HUB. Accordingly, the LPC is progressing the HUB Project on a number of fronts.

The first front is **ARCHITECTURAL** to follow on from the introductory details above. LPC councillors visited a good number of similar HUBs in the local area to understand the scope and issues involved. A list of community requirements was produced in the Briefing for Architects (see above) that was given to a number of architects. Based on a positive response at a community drop-in at the Village Institute in April 2016, the design from Martindales Architects Ltd (Oakington) was selected from the four submitted designs. We then took this design to *early planning* at South Cambs District Council (SCDC) in November 2016. This was given a strong thumbs-up by SCDC - "a commendable project to provide the

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facilities required by a growing local community“. (Note: *early planning* is technically called Pre-Application Planning and is a step towards full Planning Permission; full Planning Permission would still be required before HUB construction could begin).

The second front is **GOVERNANCE OF THE HUB**. We need to know in advance how the HUB will be set up legally – this includes ownership. It is also fundamental to have a viable business plan to show, in advance of the final decision to build, how the HUB will operate financially, pay its way and not be a burden on the community in the years ahead. It is important as well to have a clear idea on how the HUB will be managed. Our current thinking about community representation is that HUB trustee directors will be drawn from community groups and individuals who use the HUB, for example: village sports clubs, village social and leisure clubs, regular users of the HUB, Longstanton Parish Council.

The third front is **FUND RAISING**. We need to ensure we have sufficient money to build and operate the HUB. As noted above, LPC has some community assets that can be sold to help fund HUB construction. However, as these assets are unlikely to be enough to fund the whole HUB Project, fund raising will be required to make up the shortfall. **We need much wider community assistance to raise funds for the HUB**. This might include seeking financial support from local firms, local suppliers as well as members of the Longstanton community itself.

The fourth front is **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**. While LPC has initiated a wide range of activities to shape the HUB Project, we must now widen community involvement. In the first instance, we would like to involve sports, social and leisure clubs that use the existing Pavilion and Village Institute. We are also looking for local volunteers who have skills and resources that can help contribute to bringing this Project to fruition:

- “Your Community HUB needs you”.

Please contact the LPC Clerk, Libby White (parish.clerk@longstantonvillage.org), if you wish to find out more about involvement.

Progress Updates on the Longstanton Community HUB will appear in future editions of Longstanton Life in the months ahead.

Neil McPhater, Vice Chairman, Longstanton Parish Council. 8 May 2017.