

Approval Aug 2020

The toilet, store and covered area were approved by the Parish Council in August 2020 as part of the cycle track project after consultation with parishioners. Toilets were raised in the Parish Plan, consultation took place at the time of the playground, and again for the cycle track. Consultation was by questionnaire, drop in sessions (daytime and evening), and parishioners were extensively updated through the Bugle.

The total budget for this project was approved at £129,560, with operating costs of up to £4k.

At that time the PC approved the acceptance of £114,567 of grants from HS2, British Cycling and SNC. They also approved and notified the grant providers that the PC would pay just under £15k from its own funds. The PC also committed to maintain the assets.

British Cycling required fully accessible disabled toilets as a specific condition of their grant funding.

Collaboratively Working Together

Throughout the development of the CCPF the Village Hall, as a charity, and the Parish Council have worked together on a collaborative basis through the Joint Recreational Working Group - to deliver not only the playground and extension car park, but the cycle track project as well. Together we have delivered the cycle tracks and the tarmacking of the car park and paths.

It was agreed that the toilet, a store and the covered area would be most economically delivered by combining them together. It was also agreed that these would be commenced with the full cost of the other elements was known.

As new parish councillors came on board they were fully briefed on the project, the PC's commitments and new councillors, Bertie and Mark joined the Working Group, and the PC has been updated on progress at each meeting.

After a considerable period of time and a lot of hard work the Group now has a firm deliverable proposal to put to Council.

The decision

The Parish Council has the choice to approve the Working Group proposal to let the contracts which are within the parameters of the budget already agreed by the PC or to change its mind and notify grant holders accordingly and accept the consequences.

Benefits

The benefit of a toilet, store and covered area are the same as previously and have been reinforced by the number of people that use the field – and we see every day people from the field using the Village Hall's toilets.

Users:

- Parents of young children – often multiple times and multiple children
- Grand parents – more prone than many other user groups need access to toilets when bring children down
- During the pandemic and through the cost of living crises this facility is a lifeline for many families and pensioners who need somewhere to go with children that is free
- It is a fallacy to think toilets would be used only by visitors – it is a large number of parishioners as well

Also by including a hatch in the store room this could be used by groups in the village to offer a coffee service not dependent on the availability of the Hall.

There is also Health and Safety issue for the PC given that the park facilities are used extensively and as the Hall is not always available and in the absence of toilets people will urinate and defecate in the field and the surroundings, and he drew attention to the risk of human waste on animals and the food chain

Capital Cost

The proposal is to purchase a refurbished container converted by a specialist company into a cabin which contains a fully accessible disability compliant toilet, a storage area with a hatch and an open covered area and it includes everything necessary.

It will be clad in large which will either weather to grey or can be treated. We expect a 20 year lifetime and will need to depreciate the cabin and its contents for replacement.

It is designed to be secure

- CCTV linked to VH system managed by VH Charity Trustees. CCTV offers a deterrent, and in the event of any incident provides evidence that can be handed to the relevant authorities
- Time Coded Lock that can be opened from inside in and has emergency battery backup
- Covered area is located in open sight of the road/ car park according to best practice
- As far as damage is concerned
 - There has been minimal/ no damage in the VH experience
 - There is little or no anti-social behaviour
 - The facilities will be insured

Agreeing to proceed will cost the PC no more than £15k in capital costs, which has previously been committed and is held in reserves. It is anticipated, although not guaranteed that the costs will come in lower than included in this estimate and the cost to the PC should be less. The Village Hall has undertaken fundraising events over the last few years – and has a contingency of £7k should there be unforeseen costs.

This projected cost includes everything that is necessary to meet the needs of the project.

Operating Cost

In addition, the PC will incur some operating costs. This can only be an estimate – but at the Village Hall we have direct and extensive experience of the cost of maintaining toilets.

This operating cost has been estimated at around £1400 ex VAT for cleaning and cleaning products. This could be via the Hall's cleaning contractor or a local person.

The proposal assumes that the facility will be plumbed and wired into the Hall systems and those operating costs incurred will be covered by the VH.

Waste is assumed to be by use of the black bin and a bin in the toilet, there is an option for removal of sanitary waste – the Hall has a contractor to do this and costs around £100pa for each unit.

Should there be problems with the sewage then Stuart has indicated that he would be willing to help.

Insurance Costs are not included in the above as they are managed by the PC centrally but will need buildings insurance.

The Hall has already provided the PC with £1000 for maintenance, we would happily have this extended to cover the toilet. In addition if costs prove a problem then the Hall would help with additional fundraising efforts.

An opportunity has been identified to raise revenue through advertising boards which has the potential to raise several thousand pounds per year.

It will take some of the Clerk's time to field calls/complaints but once underway it is simply a matter of forwarding the complaints on to the relevant party.

Alternatives

The Working Group has spent a lot of time, particularly with Cat Ablitt (who provided her services free of charge) and Bertie to design custom-built structure. But this has proved to be far too expensive. The impact of the pandemic on the cost of supplies and builders has been dramatic and there is no sign of that changing. In practice this design has now been repurposed to define the conversion of the container with the help of Ed Preston.

The Working Group unanimously agreed that this is the best option.

Other fall-back options have been considered and dismissed. A compostable toilet/s with a sign to call to VH for disabled facilities was considered unacceptable to British Cycling and a door into the Hall toilets was dismissed as not workable.

Deciding not to proceed brings with it some consequences.

The PC has already committed £15k funds and accepted the condition from British Cycling.

- PC would lose the £20k of grants already committed and if a toilet, store or covered area was required in the future the PC would have to pay 100% of it – this is a lost opportunity
- The PC also has £4k that BC has retained, and this is unlikely to be forthcoming if the project is not completed
- BC explicitly included a disabled toilet in the specification. They are within their rights to demand repayment of £24k of the grant if it is not completed. If there was good reason for this then it could be argued – but not just for changing their mind after taking the grant

Finally, the reputational damage of the PC will be extensive. If the PC were ever to seek grants from HS2 (or groundwork managed funds) or WNC (the successor to SNC) then they would only come with extensive conditions – if at all.

Summary

The PC has a choice –

- uphold the commitment it has made to the grant providers and complete the project through the working group proposal (at a cost of up to £15k and the maintenance costs)
- or decide not to proceed and forgo the grant contributions and potentially pay back £24k and accept reputational damage.
- We have no other alternative within time and budget.