

Meeting Notes Thursday 7 August 2014

Guest speaker Les Collett used his experience at Barrington, as Chairman of the Village Hall Committee and Parish Councillor to lead a discussion group on the challenges in securing a replacement village hall.

The original Barrington village hall was a wooden army hut. The exterior had deteriorated to the extent that it needed to be replaced. The residents of Barrington were visited and simply asked, do you want a new village hall? It was a case of knocking on doors and asking but if the issue of funding was raised they were told it was not being addressed at that stage. The recorded response was that 96% were in favour of a new hall. [It was explained that the project to replace the village hall in Holwell is separate from the Neighbourhood Plan which will cover a whole range of issues affecting the Parish.](#)

A working group was set up to organise funding and organising the build of the new hall. This group had conditions imposed on the scope of their activities and reported monthly to the Trustees. Networking and using professional expertise are essential to success. Architects and builders were interviewed prior to engagement. There is a very wide range of funding sources, some large, some small but all were incorporated to achieve their funding target. The design of Barrington Village Hall evolved and funding was sought as additional facilities were added.

Barrington did not have a defined settlement boundary (like Holwell) which would normally prevent open market housing. The Barrington Village Hall Trustees were obliged to get the best funding possible from their village hall site. For social housing they were offered £5K per plot. Eventually, they sold part of their village hall site for eight terraced houses and raised £460K with all the proceeds directed to the new village hall which eventually cost £700K at 2006 prices. Initially, South Somerset District Council planners were not helpful but it was emphasised you need to challenge the planners. The new hall was built within the boundary of the old village hall site. Barrington already had a playing field. Demolition of the old hall was made into an event that brought the community together. There was a period of five months when the village was without a community hall. As the project progressed and the reality of the building programme could be seen more of the community became involved. Barrington residents were able to provide approximately £30K of the funding needed for the project. A bridging loan was obtained from CAF Bank Ltd ([same used by Holwell Trustees](#)) to commence building the new village hall once contracts had been exchanged on the sale of the old hall site. A local family firm of builders with a proven track record was used to build the hall. Increased use of the new hall has come from within the Barrington community. Underfloor heating has made the new hall a much more attractive venue, particularly in winter. When the new hall was opened hire rates were held at the same rate as the old hall for the first 12 months and then they were reviewed. [Holwell Village Hall currently charges regular local hirers £15 for up to 4 hours. The current rate for Barrington local hirers is £5.50 per hour.](#) Information about Barrington Village Hall and the complete table of hire rates is on this link <http://www.barringtonvillagehall.btck.co.uk/>. Having the capability to charge for wedding receptions is clearly a benefit when you have the appropriate facilities! Les suggested that the minimum requirements for a new village hall should include a main hall, committee/meeting room, well equipped kitchen and separate access for multiple booking and allow as much storage space as possible. Barrington has a modest stage but it has proved to be very popular - it also has very good

acoustics. Be aware that the extra roof height required for badminton adds considerably to the build cost. It was recommended to look at as many village halls as possible to determine the best designs and facilities. Based on the experience at Barrington, it was estimated that a project to replace a village hall could be expected to take four to five years.

Les Collett was thanked for his useful and inspiring contribution to the discussion. It is hoped he will be available to provide advice in the future.

There were 17 people attending the discussion group with Les Collett. They included Robert Gould (Leader of West Dorset District Council), Rodney Antell (Parish Councillor), some of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, Village Hall Trustees and Holwell residents. Bruce Duncan & Neil Rierso (Parish Councillor) offered apologies because ~~he~~ ^{they were} was unable to attend.

Additional Notes.

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The professional survey of Holwell Village Hall in 2009 estimated another 10 years of use before serious structural issues would need to be addressed. However, it was not considered viable to carry out structural repairs because of the nature of the construction. This has been the driver for the Trustees of the Hall to explore options for a community building to continue to be available. The Trustees have commissioned a report on the availability of grant funding for a new hall. The fixed fee cost of £180 will be met from monies derived from previous fund raising activities.

Comparisons were made between the population of Holwell and Barrington and the two examples at Brandeston and Bruisyard (on the holwellvillagedorset website). Robert Gould (Leader of West Dorset District Council) affirmed that support from within the community not the population in the Parish is the important criterion. Robert Gould will be our District Councillor from May 2015.

It was advised that a decision to sell the existing hall site would be decided by a vote of the inhabitants of Holwell, 18 years and over, at a meeting requiring 14 days notice, in accordance with clause 14 of the Trust Deed.