

To build a permanent village hall

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For reasons set out below, the project to replace the current portable unit with a similar structure has been abandoned. Instead the Tunstead Village Hall Trustees have agreed to focus on a project that will construct a conventionally-built village hall over a number of phases.

Background

As attempts to get a large village hall for Tunstead did not come to fruition, a proposal to replace the current portable unit with another demountable unit was made. This proposal was taken up in June 2016, and many people who use the portacabin agreed to the proposal. A likely candidate unit from ConceptCabins was identified. This had a list price of £42,000. The Tunstead Village Hall (TVH) Trustees had accrued around £30,000 through long-term fund raising. So, it was felt that the ConceptCabins unit was a viable option.

When I joined the TVH trustees, as the parish council representative, I conducted a feasibility study on continuing this proposal. However, I suggested that the TVH trustees should not lose sight of the final goal; building a large conventionally-built village hall. To that end I proposed a phased approach; each stage building upon the successes and lessons learnt from the previous stages. We would start by replacing the portacabin with the demountable unit that had already been proposed. Costs for the project were estimated at between £65,000 and £72,000, with a ceiling of £80,000. This proposal was approved by both the TVH trustees, and the parish council. In January 2018, a project team was set up to implement the proposal.

The project team followed the initial project plan, and obtained quotes from three suppliers of demountable units. Estimates for steel framed and brick-built buildings of a size similar to the demountable unit were also calculated. This enabled the costs of similar sized structures to be compared.

Lessons Learnt

During the early months of the project it became clear that simply replacing the existing unit with a similar one was not going to be as straight-forward as was hoped. A number of issues arose:

- A public building comes under different building regulations from those in force when the original unit was installed.
- Replacement units require new planning permission to be established.
- Up-rated foundations would be needed upon which to mount the new unit.
- The existing drainage system could not be used as the regulations have changed.

Whilst the list does not seem extensive, the final costs would increase by a further 25%. This would make the project costs of installing a demountable unit similar to a conventionally-built structure.

Project Progress

The project team also sought to have closer ties and support for the project from its neighbours and other organisations. As the recreation ground is in close proximity to Tunstead Primary School, it was thought that the school should be aware of the plans regarding the construction of a village hall. A meeting with the head of Tunstead Primary School, and the chair of the school governors proved

constructive, and they are willing to support the village hall building programme. They would like to make use of the facilities of the hall and recreation ground to supplement the school's facilities. The School also suggested closer ties with the village on other initiatives and events.

The project team met a local architectural specialist to discuss establishing the necessary planning permission. He suggested that the project would benefit if had a wholistic approach to the final solution as this would reduce the complexity surrounding applying for planning permission for each phase of the build. We would then be able to proceed with each phase as and when funds became available.

The way forward

Right from the project inception, it was suggested that we follow a number of phases that would lead to a large multi-purpose building. Those phases are:

- replace the portacabin,
- replace the storage container,
- re-establish a viable football field,
- refurbish or replace the shower block,
- improve access to the site and car park
- build a large village hall that could be used for indoor sports, like badminton.
- extend the sporting and playing facilities for young people.

What is now being proposed is a reinforcement of that approach. It is proposed to develop a structure that would culminate in a large village hall. We would start with the small hall, that would be extended over time to include more facilities.

If, as the architectural specialist suggests, we present a proposal for planning permission for the complete building, not just the small hall, we can take advantage of the rules on planning, so that we would not have to re-apply at a future date. The planning permission proposal would also include a replacement storage unit and shower block.

It is estimated that the initial build for the small hall will cost between £120,000 and £140,000.

Concept drawings have been created. The building will consist of three brick-built units of 10 metre span designed to capture the look and feel of the local agricultural buildings. These will not look out of place on the recreation ground, as the surrounding area on two sides is arable farm-land. The initial building will contain a small hall sufficient for 50 people. There will be a kitchen and lavatories. The attic space will become the village office. Later phases will see the construction of a sports hall big enough for badminton. Attached to the large hall will be a set of changing rooms suitable for outdoor sports. There will also be a first aid room which will act as a consultation room for visiting health practitioners.

What happens now

The new direction for the village hall project has been agreed and supported by the Tunstead Village Hall Trustees and the Parish Council. The existing project team will continue with their efforts. A project plan has been created. The next task is to engage with an architectural company to draw up the plans and documentation ready to meet the planning system requirements and the building regulations for a public building. The team are looking to complete the building of the small hall by Summer 2020.