1. Executive summary

This document has been produced by members of the GPC Community Centre working party to enable Glinton Parish Council to make a well balanced decision on the future of Glinton Village Hall. The report considers all options, ranging from a brand new community centre, refurbishing and updating the existing hall, or simply maintaining and encouraging use of the existing facilities.

This reports contains a data based analysis of Glinton's current village hall, possible refurbishment options, and the feasibility of constructing a new Community Centre.

Although there is a perceived need within Glinton that suggests an overwhelming requirement for community centre (September 2020 village survey in which 187 papers were returned (27% response) 169 in favour and 18 against, the evidence of usage (pre-COVID utilisation was 36%), income and actual overall resident support may not indicate such a undertaking can be justified.

To extend the halls life and usability a pragmatic approach might be to accept some of the limitations of the current building (such as car parking) mitigate others (improve access and insulation) and invest a modest amount to carry out some long overdue improvements (internal modifications and rearranged storage).

There is little doubt that a new Community Centre could be a tremendous village asset if evidence indicates that demand for space exceeds existing capacity. However, need is only part of the equation, for it to be truly successful a prerequisite should be the emergence of a strong thriving community spirit that translates into residents willingness to volunteer in the running of the existing hall and their involvement in the working party to create the new centre.

To confirm the recommendations of this report, and before making any decisions, GPC may wish to conduct a comprehensive village survey focusing solely on the village hall and new Community Centre.

Cllr Gerry Kirt/Cllr Bob Randall/Gordon Wright
4 July 2021

2. Introduction

Glinton Parish Council took over the ownership of Glinton Village Hall (GVH) from Peterborough City Council in 2019. It was thought as the existing building had several limitations that adversely affected its usage and revenue, the feasibility of constructing a new facility should be considered by a working party. A village survey was completed in September 2020 indicating the majority of those residents that responded (187 papers returned equating to a 27% response) 169 in were in favour and 18 against. Armed with this positive response the Parish Council commissioned a professional feasibility study using a recently completed Community Centre in Duxford and a potential site on the Parish Council owned recreation ground. On conclusion it was felt options including the refurbishment/upgrade of the existing hall should be also considered to enable the Parish Council to make a well balanced decision on how best to proceed.

This document considers:

- Future usage of UK village halls and volunteer support
- GVH pre COVID and post COVID usage, associated revenue stream, and projected maintenance.
- Limitations of GVH and possible solutions
- Refurbishment/upgrade of GVH.
- Construction of a new Community Centre.
- Recommendations.

3. Future usage of UK village halls and volunteer support

The UK has around 10,000 village halls, many of which are maintained and managed by thousands of local, unpaid, volunteers; however, concerns have been raised by ACRE and in the national press that young volunteers are failing to step forward to help run them as the older generation step down from their committee roles.

In a recent, 2020, survey by ACRE more than half of the halls who responded said they were struggling to find new recruits to help manage the buildings – with people saying they were too busy, too old or simply not interested ACRE Village Halls Manager Deborah Clarke said: "Village halls are vital for the survival of rural communities. People want to use them but they don't want to commit to running them". Recently, our own horticultural society reported difficulties in recruiting new committee members to replace existing, and ageing, members.

Louise Beeton, a freelance village hall advisor and consultant for over 30 years and says she has seen a "huge change" over the period. She said:

"*It makes me sad to see the difficulty that trustees are now facing. Village halls need to adapt to the future and modern day requirements but they can only do that if there is support ….. occasionally a hall is lucky enough to get younger volunteers but most of them are relying on older trustees who are now in their 70s and 80s."*

50% of halls that responded to ACRE 2020 survey stated that they regularly had difficulty in recruiting new committee members, this position has grown worse since 2009 when only 39% reported difficulties. 50% of village halls also reported problems with a lack of community support. The lack of volunteers probably explains why 44% of halls are now employing staff; however, the report also notes the impact this has on the financial health of village halls.

The lack of interest in our hall was illustrated clearly when Glinton parents at Peakirk cum Glinton primary school were asked, in late 2020, whether anyone wanted to volunteer to join the new community centre working party, none came forward. The lack of support outside the superb small team that runs the village hall is a major concern especially as there does not seem to be any residents willing to take over or assist the group in their endeavours. Similarly Jeff Bell does not have a second in command to take over should he stand down.

This clearly demonstrates a significant medium to long term cause for concern for Glinton's village hall/community centre. Unless they can be addressed the future of our hall must be questioned.

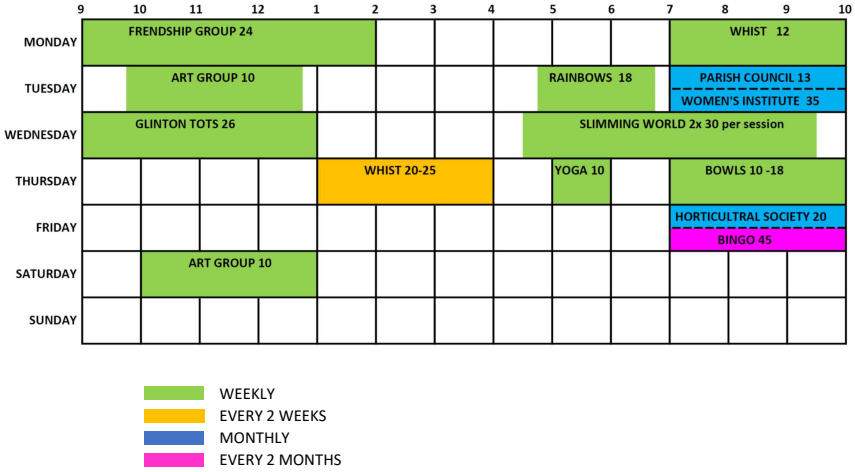
ACRE's report suggests that traditional activities in village halls remain popular, with an increase, since 2009, in use by private parties but a decline in use for whist drives, discos/dances and weddings. Pre-school education is a prominent use, and this is an activity increasingly taking place in halls. Certain growth areas are apparent, for instance, in the use of halls for children's dance classes and fitness classes, the latter viewed as a growing use by 50 per cent of respondents and continuing the trend in growth from 2009.

When villages have a thriving community spirit and a willingness to volunteer then village halls are a very successful asset, however, many village halls report problems when the community is not prepared to volunteer or support their activities.

4. GVH pre COVID and post COVID usage, associated revenue stream, and projected maintenance.

PRE-COVID VILLAGE HALL USAGE

REGULAR USERS:



MONTHLY REGULAR OCCUPANCY RATE 36%

Note: It is likely that some groups may not continue after lock-down – slimming world has already indicated it might not continue.

OTHER USERS:

10 x Children's parties per year with typically 18 to 30 children plus adults
1 x Horticultural Society plant sale per year with 40 to 50 attending

5. Limitations of GVH and possible solutions

Existing users and operators of the existing hall have been contacted and the limitations of the hall are reflected in the following section.

All of the following can be carried out independently or in conjunction with others

Car parking. Lack of car parking for the existing Village Hall is a considerable disadvantage to those wishing to drive to the community facility. Although adequate on road parking exists around the church and associated roads this is compromised during school drop-off and collection times. Those with blue disabled stickers can of course park on the High Street which provides reasonable access to the Village Hall.

- It is unlikely that additional car parking facilities will be available although during school holidays the primary school could provide additional space on its playground.

Storage. Because village hall has been built on two distinct levels with storage for tables and chairs provided on the upper level, it is extremely difficult for volunteers to move these items. Although the hall contains extensive storage, it is insufficient to accommodate the speed watch equipment.

- It would be fairly straightforward to provide table storage in the main hall between the heating cupboard and electrical cupboard. This would also free off existing storage space to accommodate the speed watch equipment.

Catering. If meals are being prepared they must be transported through the small hall and down the steps into the large hall which is less than ideal if the smaller hall is occupied.

- If a corridor is created between the kitchen and main hall with a gradual ramp in the floor together with a door into the smaller room this would solve the problem.

Play area. When the mum and toddler group use the hall, they often use the outside space between the rear entrance and the disabled toilet door. It would be advantageous if more of this area could be covered.

- A simple solution would be to extend the existing covered walkway up to the outside boundary wall running along the side of the hall.

Thermal efficiency. The hall Is of solid brick construction that is grossly inefficient. It is unclear whether the ceiling space is adequately insulated and grant availability.

- Filling the space between the brick piers of the main hall with plaster board faced foam board would significantly improve the buildings thermal efficiency. Investigation should be carried out to establish whether the ceiling space is adequately insulated and whether the village hall is eligible for energy grants.

Main hall floor. The floor is reaching the end of its life and needs replacing.

- As part of any renovations the main floor should be renewed.

Internal access for wheelchair users. Currently wheelchair users have to travel up the ramp and exit through the rear door then outside under the rear canopy to enter the building to access toilet facilities.

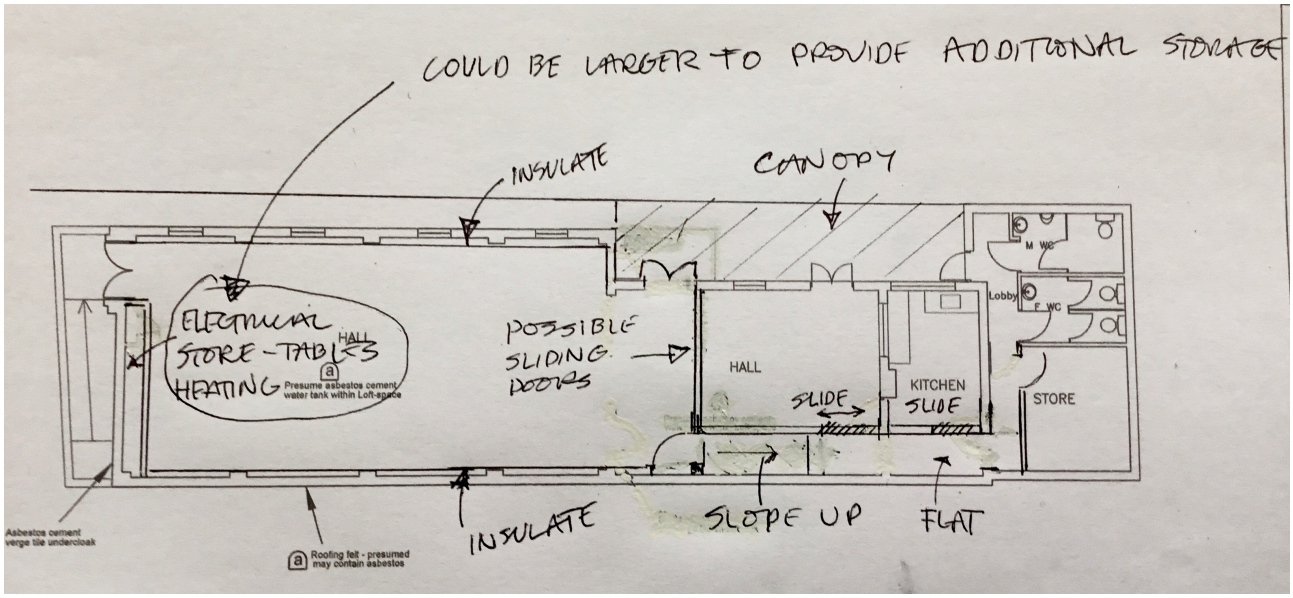
- If a corridor is created between the kitchen and main hall with a gradual ramp in the floor together with a door into the smaller room this could solve the problem.

Large Hall. In the past there has been a suggestion that the large hall should be expanded to accommodate bigger groups of people.

- Expand the large hall half way into the small hall, relocating folding doors and main entrance as part of the work. The main hall floor level would need to be extended through into part of the space occupied by the small hall. Because it is unclear what is below the small hall floor investigation is required to establish whether the space below is soil or concrete. Either will have cost implications.

6. Refurbishment/upgrade of the existing hall

6.1 Single upgrade project. All the elements in section 5 can be incorporated into a single refurbishment project illustrated below.



Order of cost: £200k - £250k

6.2 Rebuild on existing site. An alternative would be to demolish the hall apart from the frontage (conservation area) and rebuild with a new steel portal construction. Within which the toilets and kitchen would be located by the entrance. The remaining area would be divided between a large and small hall together with appropriate levels of storage.

Order of cost: £500k - £600k

6.3. Construction of a new Community Centre.

For expediency the scheme was based on a recently completed Centre in Duxford. Located on the southwest corner of the recreation ground the eco facility comprises of a large hall, two smaller halls, potential coffee bar, office space for the Parish Council clerk and associated infrastructure. Access would be via the Old Lincoln road and afford car parking adjacent to the building. Some details such as sewerage provision, precise building size and configuration require clarification.

Over recent months concern has been expressed from many residents regarding using the recreation ground as the potential location for the Community Centre.

Order of cost £800k - £1m

7. Recommendations.

The combination of uncertain usage of the village hall combined with difficulty in finding new volunteers to assist with its running, makes the justification for a new Community Centre questionable . Against this background it is felt a major investment in a new hall/community centre would seem difficult to justify as the majority of costs would be borne by residents who would probably not use the facility.

A more prudent strategy might be to embark on selective improvements to the existing hall or roll them into a single project that would update the building to address its shortcomings. This would reduce the burden on residents and in no way compromise the option of developing a brand new community centre in the future.

It is suggested that more work is carried out on the chosen route to firm up costs and to investigate possible grant funding. Once complete, the results can be presented to GPC for consideration and possible action.

GPC may wish to conduct a more comprehensive village survey in which residents are presented with a comprehensive set of data eg annual cost to them of a new hall; it's definite location; requests for volunteers to run the existing hall; their involvement in developing the new Centre and ideas to increase the utilisation of the existing facility.

Irrespective of the chosen route the strategy should be reviewed annually in terms of volunteer involvement and hall utilisation.

Appendix 1 - Report comments by Working Party members and Village Hall Committee

1.1 Chris Wild - Working Party

Congratulations to the active members of the working party for producing a comprehensive, cogent and balanced report on the issues and options for addressing the future of Glinton Village Hall.

I generally fully support the analyses and recommendations proposed and have just few suggestions for consideration (mostly minor) which you may find of use:

Section 3
The third paragraph with the exception of the last sentence appears to be a repetition of the second paragraph.

Section 6.3
From the very beginning there were concerns expressed (mainly by dog walkers I believe) at the potential siting of a new hall. I do not recall these being quantified at that time and I assume the increase mentioned here is based on hearsay and if so would be better excluded in my opinion.

Section 7
A new call for volunteers, could be supplemented by targeted recruitment actions. I understand for instance that Luke Weston is actively and professionally involved in arranging after-school and holiday activities for village children and his advice and support could be valuable.

1.2 Denis Batty - Working Party

Thank you for your very detailed and excellent report which covers most of the problems facing the decision for Glinton Parish Council to either refurbish the existing Village Hall or to construct a new one.
I support the report but would like to add these comments;

The ACRE report suggests that there is a lack of enthusiastic Volunteer Community minded Young People over a very wide area to get involved in managing Village Halls --- so we are no exception.
My experience in getting people involved with Glinton Youth Club confirmed this a long time ago.

Parking --- This problem will always remain and I doubt that the Primary School will ever agree to their playground being used as a car park --- it would only be available when the School was closed – would need the School caretaker on site and would have safety and insurance implications.

The user chart shows that the Hall is under used and indications are that several current users may not come back after Covid
--- Do we know if there are any Clubs / Groups / Organisations or business based in Glinton who use a Village Hall in another Village.

The existing users of the Village Hall have been consulted for their views on how they would like to see the Hall improved to suit their particular needs.
The only suggestions appear to be covering part of the outside passage so that the toddlers can play, better access for the disabled and extending the main hall.

Do we have any idea of the percentage of people using the Hall who actually reside in Glinton.

The proposed plan to alter the layout of the Hall has its merits .
It provides better access for the disabled , extra storage at the front of the Hall and possibly a larger main hall.
What happens to the storage cupboards along the proposed passage --- will they remain or will they be re sited.

The kitchen area is very cramped and I understand that meals have been produced there in the past.
There are no comments from users about this.

Insulation --- Is there a legal obligation on the Hall to provide a minimum temperature within the Hall and if so is the current heating system adequate

If the existing Hall was to be refurbished and updated more users / customers would need to be found in order to cover the expense ----
hourly rate would need to be increased ----
how would this effect existing users

Perhaps facilities available at the Village Hall are not advertised enough within the Village ---
Ie Birthdays --- anniversaries --- childrens parties ----family get togethers --- plus alcohol can be consumed on the premises .

If more storage space was made available equipment owned by Glinton Youth Club could be moved from AMVC and stored at the Hall
This includes a full size folding table tennis table and a number of other games which could be offered to hirers of the Hall for childrens parties etc.
However all this still requires an active management team

However if a New Village Hall was to be constructed a vigorous campaign would need to be launched in order to establish the necessary funds to construct it ---
that the Hall was fully booked on a regular basis in order to recoup the initial and running costs and it would require a strong management team to make this successful.

1.3 Sue Lane/Jeff Bell/Diane

Sorry I have not replied before now about your plans. Diane and Jeff gave there opinions which are below then some from me.
Diane said she was concerned about the corridor from kitchen to big room, which would mean the loss of storage.
Jeff said The Parish Council had a compressive document submitted by himself two years ago. He stands by every word in it. The vision and ambition is disappointing.
My opinion:- to extend the canopy would be quite beneficial to all. As I'm sure since I last saw you you would see a table carrier in hall already, which I think will be a bit hit with people. Another to purchased shortly for bigger tables. I do not really like the idea of a corridor to be built, a big loss of storage also. It would be nice to be able to get up/down to large/small hall easier. I know this means a ramp of some sort some how! I would like to see the kitchen blocked off so when people went through to toilet they don't go into kitchen area, a new door into the kitchen somehow. Storage area could do with a big sort. I am no designer but could kitchen and storage area be redesigned? The use of the kitchen is not huge, the people who use most are the friendship group. When we have Bingo our last one 58 people came , two short of maximum sitting down. The more we take away the less people we can have. The two levels are not a big problem but not the greatest.

I also think new floors in both halls the same kind of flooring. At the moment small room has carpet. Most of our regular users do not wish to pay to much to rent hall!! Hopefully as we get back to some kind of normality once a year prices will be reviewed. I think I said to you it took me ages to get it changed from what it was, and groups were in uproar. The biggest problem will always be parking.
I would also say large room is used mostly over small one.