

Fordcombe Community & Sports Hall Business and Development Plan

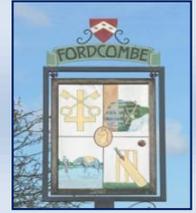


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INTRODUCTION - A NEW COMMUNITY & SPORTS HALL FOR FORDCOMBE VILLAGE



The area and surrounding land in which a new community village hall is to be built is owned by a registered charity (Number 235361), the Fordcombe Village Hall and managed through a Village Hall Committee of 10 persons, with 3 Trustees who monitor the work of the Committee. Fordcombe Village Hall's charitable objectives are:

- For the benefit of the inhabitants living in the ecclesiastical parish of Fordcombe without distinction of political religious or other opinions.

The current Village Hall and its facilities are available to those that want to use them, however this situation is not without its costs and maintenance implications. Fundamentally, the Village Hall Committee and Trustees are responsible for ensuring that a village hall and outside areas continue to exist in some form, through maintenance, upgrading or renewal. They are also responsible for ensuring the safety and security of users. The running of the charity is solely undertaken by volunteers from the community.

This Business and Development Plan and the associated planning approval is the culmination of several years of discussions and consultation with local people regarding the future of the village hall and its outside areas.

At the village hall AGM in March 2014 a new group of village volunteers was formed to take action and explore whether it would be possible to refurbish the old hall or draw up plans for a new hall. The nature of the building's fabric, foundations, access and layout meant a refurbishment project to meet the current and future needs of the villagers would be impossible.

All village groups, other users and villagers were consulted about the situation and overwhelming support for a new hall was expressed in the village hall Annual General Meeting in March 2015 and again in March 2016. The New Fordcombe Village Hall Action Group has worked together with the Village Hall Committee and Trustees, which has ensured that the day to day running and responsibilities regarding the current hall have not been neglected.

In respect of the approved plans for a new hall complex, we took extensive advice and looked at the best examples of other new halls. All the responses during the consultation process were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposals. The initial proposals were developed by taking careful consideration of the responses and concerns of local people and user groups. We then continued adjusting the plans and layout design as far as possible to meet all the points raised by the current community. Indeed, the Trustees believe that the approved plans for the new hall and associated facilities have been carefully and sensitively developed and will be capable of meeting not only the current but also the future needs of the developing local community.

Implementation of the scheme will obviously involve many challenges, not least in terms of raising the funds to bring the scheme to fruition.

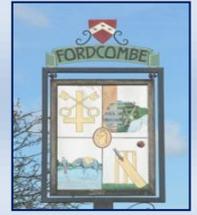
Trustees: Tom Rimmer, Brent Gebbie, Fraser Greenshields

Chair of Village Hall Committee: John Morrison

Chair of Action Group: Elaine Barnett

HISTORY

Fordcombe is a village within the civil parish of Penshurst in the Sevenoaks District of Kent, England. The village is located on the northern slopes of the Weald, five miles (8 km) west of Tunbridge Wells.



Until the middle of the 19th century, 'Fordcomb-Green' was a hamlet with a few houses set around the crossroads near the Manor of Chafford, located within a triangle of three long-established villages, Ashurst, Penshurst and Speldhurst.

The hamlet had a population largely involved in agriculture, but from early times there had also been workers at the Chafford Mill on the Medway, between the Chafford and Colliersland bridges. However, due to the discovery of the special quality of the spring water (hence the name Springhill nearby) the mill changed from grain milling to high quality paper-making, which required additional labour, and at one time had a workforce totalling 70, and so Fordcomb-Green's population grew. The hamlet lay within the ecclesiastical parish of Penshurst: in the 1840s this had about 1,500 inhabitants, around 500 of whom lived within the 'Fordcomb-Green' area.

A Petition for a new place of worship was made to the Archbishop, John Bird Sumner, as it was a three mile walk to St. John the Baptist church in Penshurst, and therefore the Fordcomb-Green parishioners were "precluded from attending Divine Worship". In 1847 the Diocese of Canterbury (now Rochester) agreed that a Chapelry (or Chapel at Ease) should be built in Fordcomb-Green, with services conducted mainly by Penshurst clergy.

In the 19th Century, Fordcombe continued to expand. Chafford Mill "gave work to a thriving community" – hence the millworkers' dedicated houses: seven in Stone Row, one later becoming the shop; the original six of St Peter's Row; and ten in the Chafford Cottages beside Chafford Bridge, and therefore close to the Mill. With an increasing population came the services needed to maintain it, including the shop-cum-Post Office, a fishmonger, a butcher, a baker and a cricket ball maker plus a laundry. Most of these had sadly disappeared before World War II, but the shop, now much missed, remained until the 1990s.



For over 150 years from 1756, the paper produced at the Mill was used for many purposes throughout the world, including the Bank of England's £5 notes, many postage stamps, cartridge paper for the Tower of London and paper for the Government of India. However the mill was bought by Wiggins Teape in 1913 and promptly closed, causing many villagers to be out of work. The Mill buildings were eventually demolished in the 1930s and today only the outline of the walls and the mill race can be seen.

Fordcombe's Church of England Primary School Log Book shows that the school opened in 1862, to be run by a mistress and monitors. For the first nine years it enrolled pupils from as young as 1½ to 12, all taught in the same building. However in 1871 it was divided into Infant and Mixed schools, with a combined roll of 80 children. This indicates the growing size of the village population, which in August 1870 had led to it becoming a separate parish with its own priest, so that marriage services no longer had to be conducted in Penshurst. In August 1870 a Vicar, the Reverend George Clowes, was instituted, becoming the first of Fordcombe's nine incumbents.

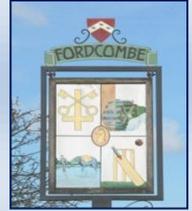
Subscriptions for the Fordcombe War Memorial (the Great War) covered the construction of the "Village Club" in 1920, which is today's Village Hall, as well as the Memorial Cross, and were paid for by donations from the village.

A total of £910 was raised: £734 (80%) for the Village Club and £176 (20%) for the Memorial Cross. The largest sums came from the two Miss Fields of Ashurst Park, each contributing £200. They also generously donated the site which today includes the Hall and the Recreation Field which incorporates the cricket ground.

An extension was added to provide a kitchen, another smaller room, one shower & toilets some years later. Now **nearly 100 years old**, the wooden Village Club building has reached the end of its economic life.

The hall has served the community well but the condition of the building, reaching its centenary, its poor foundations and construction, and the facilities it provides are totally inadequate for meeting current needs or those of the future population.

WHY A COMMUNITY & SPORTS HALL IS IMPORTANT TO OUR VILLAGE COMMUNITY



The village hall and external areas are very important in the social fabric of the local community.

A community and sports hall is a vital local meeting point and aids social cohesion to village life. It provides premises for locals and others of all ages and backgrounds to meet, be entertained, keep fit and form friendships. There is no longer a village shop but having a village hall is as important as having a pub, a church, and a school at the heart of the community. Fordcombe has the benefit of enjoying all these other facilities.

A community & sports hall will be used by a large number of social, educational, and recreational groups, some weekly, some monthly and some not quite so regularly. Examples of current use of the old hall are a Pre-School, Women's Institute, Over 60's, Luncheon Club, Footsteps Dance, Line Dancing, Table Tennis Club, Parish Council meetings, Yoga sessions, Private social events including children's parties, Stoolball Club, Cricket Club, Junior Cricket training and Village Events e.g. Fete & Flower Shows, Pop up Cafes, Music Nights & Quiz Nights.

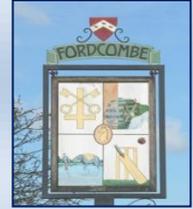
We talk about the current and proposed uses in greater detail in this document, with particular emphasis on social, physical and sporting activities for the very young to the elderly.

There has been a gradual decline in the use of the current hall due to the outdated facilities and difficulty in access. There is now a need to create something truly inspirational through the community coming together to create a new community and sports centre which will ensure benefits for users, not just now but well into the future. It needs to be something of which everyone can be proud.

This is the second attempt in the last 15 years to provide new facilities and it is getting to the point that should nothing happen again this time, there is a danger that the existing hall will actually have to close permanently. The loss of a village hall will have very detrimental effects including social isolation for the vulnerable elderly, no centre for sports and other activities, and no facility for pre-school children and those without transport.

However, the huge amount of work that has gone into this current scheme, from the community generally and the Action Group, has meant we believe this aspiration will become a reality within the next 3 years.





EVOLVING THE PROPOSALS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CURRENT & FUTURE USERS

Many other local villages have in recent years found their village halls wanting and so, through a lot of endeavour, have provided modern premises which are a credit to their communities. The results have been more flexible accommodation able to meet the needs of their communities, and improved community engagement.

After talking to user groups and local people, the Trustees and Village Hall Committee held a village meeting to seek a mandate to provide a new hall and supporting facilities, rather than spend increasing sums of money on expensive repairs to maintain a building which would still be totally inadequate for current and future requirements. The vote was overwhelmingly positive and volunteers were recruited to form an Action Group to take the proposal forward on their behalf.

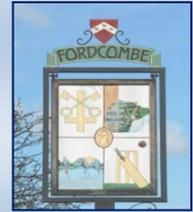
Further engagement with the local community was sought as to the requirements for current and future users of the hall for a new, energy efficient building, more suited to current and future needs.

Questionnaires were completed by all the main users to seek information on their requirements. This provided a key input to establish the broad principles of the project. The main points were that there should be two halls (one large hall for village or social events and one small hall for smaller groups) and they should both have well equipped modern kitchens, access to toilets and be able to be concurrently used without disturbing each other. Storage areas needed to be more accessible. Improved access was needed for those less mobile or with buggies including the ability for the disabled to park close to the entrance. Finally, for sports groups there should be showers and changing facilities.

Community inputs have continued to be promoted, through consultation, publicity and public meetings, as the final design of the building was gradually formulated. Full information as to progress being made as the building is constructed will also be provided using various methods, including social media.

The General Booking Conditions of the Hall allow usage from 08.00 to midnight, (with an allowance for setting up before 8.00am). Music must be turned down at 10.30pm and stop completely at 11.45pm.

Trustees are anxious to ensure that neighbours who adjoin the site are not inconvenienced by undue noise from activities in the Hall and consider that there is no need to vary the hours of current usage in respect of the new Hall and external areas. Some complaints have been notified to Trustees in respect of noise problems in recent years but the new building will have superior noise insulation.



PLANNING PERMISSION

There was discussion over whether to try and take down the old building and then build on that footprint but a key requirement for villagers was that the current hall should remain open until the construction of the new building was completed (estimated to be some 2 – 3 years) in order to avoid displacing the many current users which in turn would mean a significant loss of income for the hall during this period. Furthermore, finding alternative accommodation for these users would prove extremely difficult.

Consequently, it was concluded that the new building should be located immediately to the side of the existing hall. On completion of the building work, the old hall will be demolished and a small landscaped car park will be created on the site.

The District Council was consulted over the proposals and what might prove to be acceptable with regard to footprint, design and a newly created car park.

The footprint of the new building is slightly larger than the old building in order to meet the needs of the users and you will see from the plans that this building will comprise:

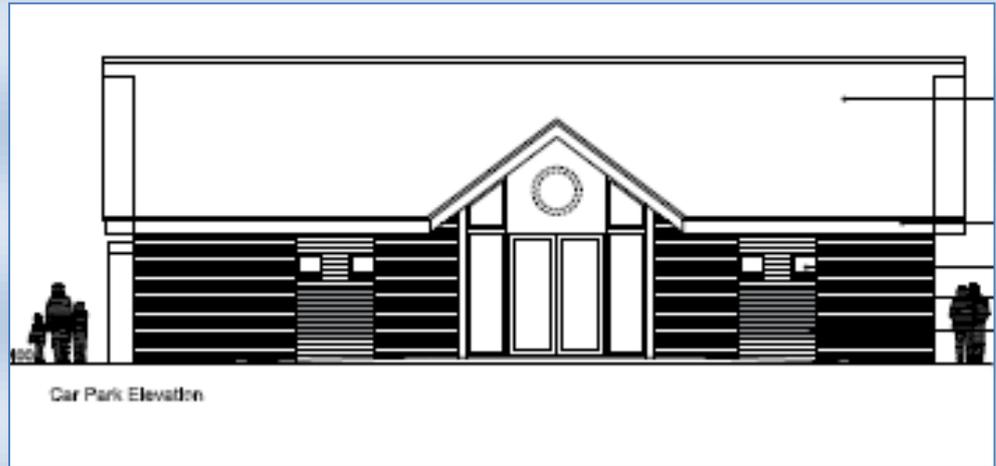
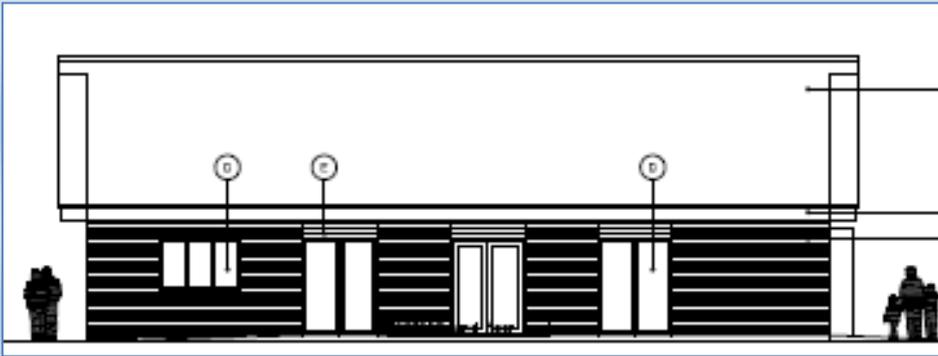
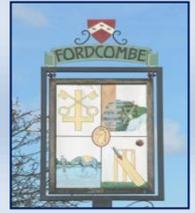
Ground Floor: A communal Reception area with access to toilets, a disabled toilet and a shower, self contained large and small halls with their own kitchen and storage area and an additional toilet to the large hall.

First Floor: There are stairs from the communal area to the upstairs area which comprises changing rooms and showers.

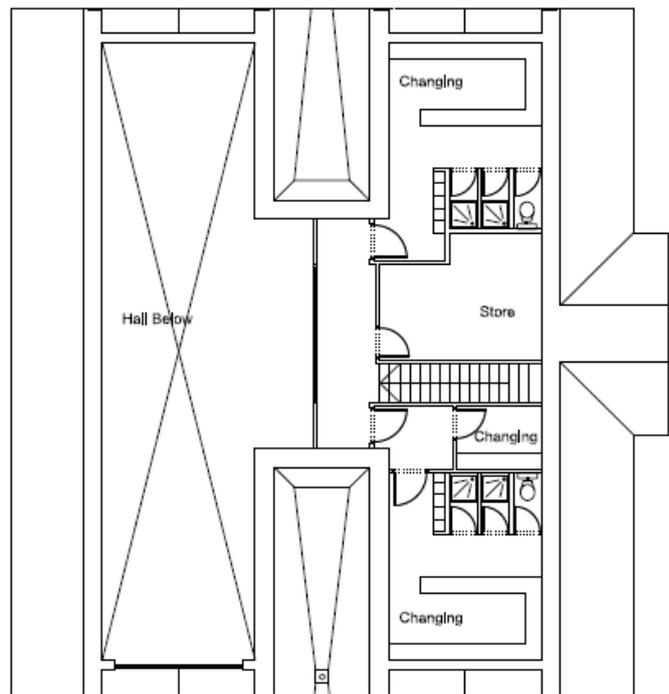
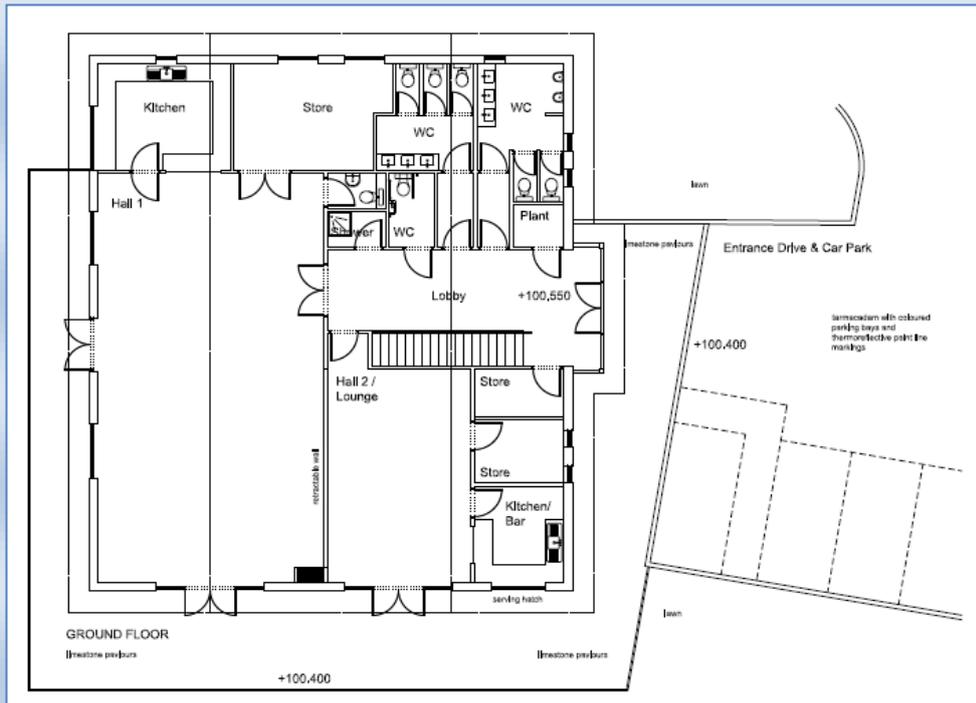
Both halls have at least one window overlooking the field.

The new building will be nearer to the existing children's play area and there will also be much needed more accessible car parking, increasing from the current 3 off road spaces to 7 car parking spaces which includes a disabled parking bay very close to the entrance, and the possibility of further parking in the driveway to the car park. The District Council acknowledges that this will not meet all the needs of the hirers of the hall but they could not sanction a visually larger car park within the centre of the village and they were aware of the field being used for 'overspill' parking when on-street parking on local roads was full to capacity.

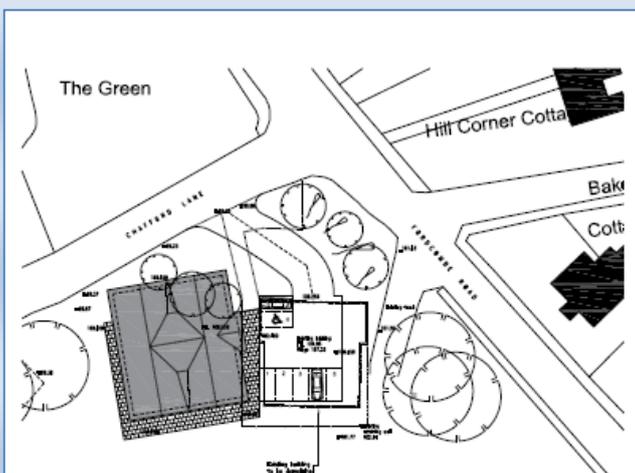
FORDCOMBE'S NEW COMMUNITY & SPORTS HALL - LOVING WHERE WE LIVE



FORDCOMBE'S NEW COMMUNITY & SPORTS HALL - LOVING WHERE WE LIVE



FIRST FLOOR



AFFORDABILITY OF NEW HALL - MAINTENANCE & PROJECTED INCOME

From the outset of this project careful consideration has been given to the need to ensure that once the new hall has been constructed, it can 'pay its way', with income received for the use of the facilities exceeding operating and maintenance costs.

It should be noted that, being a charity, there is no requirement to have a profit element in its finances, only a need for it to be able to generate sufficient income to pay for the costs of insurance, heating, lighting, cleaning and maintaining the building and external areas, with some monies held in reserve for a 'rainy day fund'

In considering the future situation regarding income and operating costs, certain assumptions have been made; but a key input to this assessment is an appreciation of the recent past and current situations.

The size of the current premises and the available accommodation continually limit what activities can take place and is becoming a constraint with hirers and there is an inability to run concurrent or overlapping activities with another hirer. By providing a new hall, it is anticipated that the uplift in usage (and hence income) could be in the order of 10% for the first year, rising to 15% in year 2, 20% in year 3, and to 25 % in the subsequent years 4 and 5.

This assumption has been based on the fact that a requirement of the new hall has been that it should be a much more usable and appealing space which will attract additional users. As the new building will provide modern, attractive facilities, it will undoubtedly appeal to a wider audience, comprising both existing and new users. By having two halls, concurrent events could be held and the smaller hall would be ideal for smaller groups. For certain community events, e.g. the Village Fete and Flower Show, both halls can be used.

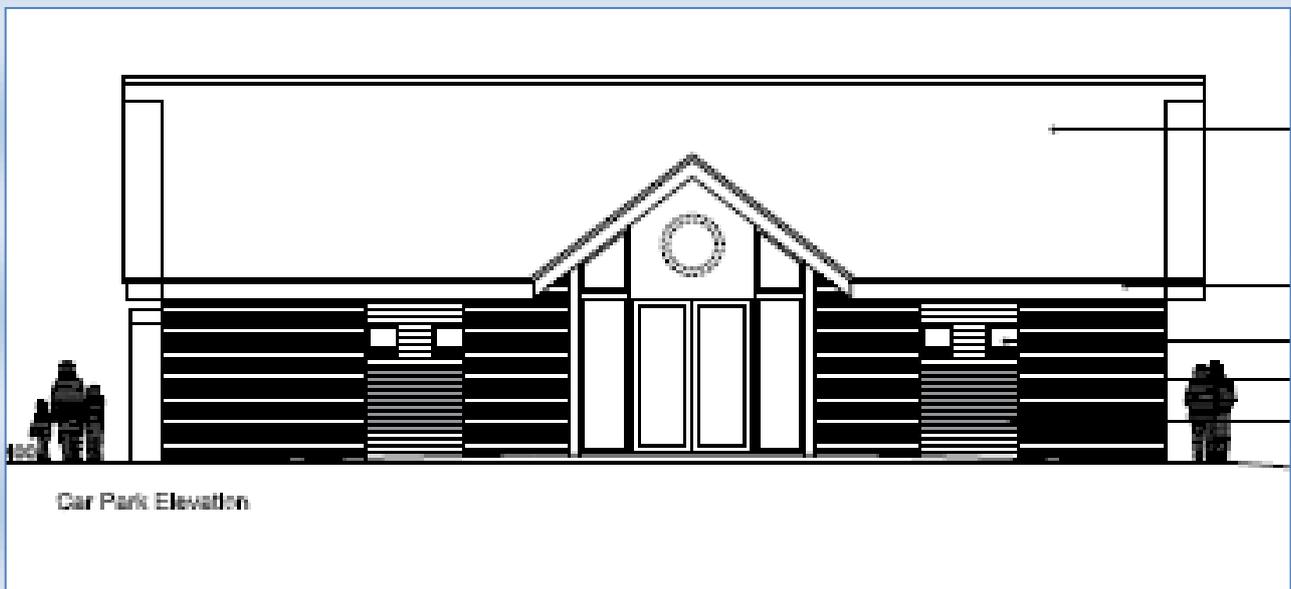
Further bookings could arise from potentially newly constituted clubs and organisations – social and recreational, social events, business and community meetings - which could encourage those who no longer use the hall due to its condition, to return. Besides the demand for social and business activities, it is considered that an increase in physical recreational activities could play a very important part in the future of the hall, e.g. more dance/exercise classes. In addition, there is an awareness that with the increased growth in the elderly population, the need for suitable types of social events for this age group will also rise. The Hedge Barton park home site of 74 dwellings, for those over 50 years, has no social amenities so there is a degree of social isolation.

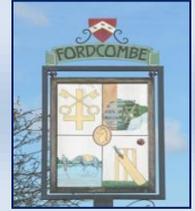
In light of an increasing population and pressures for new homes in the south east of England, we also could not assume that there will be no future residential development in Fordcombe so had to plan for some additional capacity.

FORDCOMBE'S NEW COMMUNITY & SPORTS HALL - - LOVING WHERE WE LIVE

The actual operating costs of running the hall are unlikely to be significantly higher than for the existing building, even with the extra floor space. This is because of the much superior insulation and energy systems of the new building compared to the existing building, and the reduced need for expensive maintenance and repairs. There will be an increased income from bookings to pay for increased insurance and additional cleaning and maintenance costs associated with that increase in bookings.

One of the nearest local villages with a recently built new hall, Groombridge, is almost fully booked on most days so it is also likely that Fordcombe would be an alternative venue once the new hall is constructed.





FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

A number of successful fund raising events have already taken place which meant there was sufficient money available to fund the first stage of the project which was the preparation of detailed plans and their submission for planning permission which is now granted.

There is still in excess of £22,000 and other events are planned for the next two or three years which will increase this sum to around £50,000.

The funding for the construction of the hall will need to be secured before it can proceed.

Grant Funding:

A number of organisations make grants available to support projects such as this.

Applications will be made to:

- Big Lottery Fund
- Sport England
- KentSport
- Sevenoaks Community Grants Scheme
- KCC Village & Community Hall Scheme

For the past two years there has been a dedicated Council Tax Precept, initiated by the Parish Council which raised £5,000 last year and Parish Councillors will lobby for this to continue until the works are completed.

We will also be seeking personal and corporate donations which we feel will be significant within the village for this once in a lifetime project. Names of significant donors can be displayed on plaques above entrances and within the hall if desired.



BUSINESS PLAN

- **2017 – 2018**

Apply for grants available within this financial year. Obtain significant donations from villagers and reach a total for commencing the new build. Continue village fundraising efforts.

- **2018-2019**

Apply for further grants and invite donations in order to complete the build and supply appropriate fixtures and fittings.

- **2019-2020**

Apply for further grants and invite donations to enable the old building to be demolished and the new car park created.

- **2021 A CENTURY AFTER THE ORIGINAL HALL WAS BUILT, WE HAVE A NEW HALL FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**