

Report of the meeting of the Richard Cooper Room committee of Wednesday 19th Jan 2022.

The meeting was called specifically for the committee to discuss the recently received report on the condition and repair needs of the building, the survey having been carried out by Friend Associates on November 18th 2021 and commissioned by Shenstone Parish Council.

Members present: Bev Ollerenshaw (Chair), Patricia Rock (Secretary), Keith Goldsworthy (Treasurer), Jean Coton, David Salter (SPC Nominated member).

Most members had had the opportunity of sight of the full report, it having been circulated electronically by the Parish Clerk. DS ensured that all present had a copy of the compilation sheet (attached) itemising the defects, a time-line and the estimated cost of the works identified.

It was stated that certain items, such as: 3.K.2. - woodworm infestation treatment, had already been dealt with and that several of the other smaller jobs including, but not exclusively; rainwater blockage (2.E.1.) adjustment or servicing of window frames (2.I.1.), mould treatment (3.J.4.), and even the front step side-walls (5.E.2.) could be carried out by local tradesmen at much reduced costs.

There was concern that, if it were the case that the PC owned the building, there may be an inclination on their part to consider the building beyond economical repair and, particularly as there are several other community buildings and rooms within the village, a decision might be made to close the facility and use, or sell, the land for other purposes.

DS explained that if public money had to be spent then full justification had to be made by exploring all options, alternatives and outcomes. Considering what else could be done with the land was only one, remote and, in his opinion, very unlikely, avenue.

PR asked if it would be better for the management committee to raise the funds themselves, as they have done for most of all previous works, and in that way remove the PC's obligations associated with justification.

DS stated that it most definitely would and that, as appointed Managing Trustees, it is entirely within their remit to carry out any maintenance. He also referred to a 1957 document which had recently come to light which implies that the PC may have been vested only with Holding Trustee Status and the responsibility for the management and control of the premises, according to clause 3 of the 1918 Deed of Conveyance, had been vested in the management committee. It was explained that the documents are currently being investigated by solicitors and PC are awaiting their opinion in respect of roles, responsibilities and duties of the parties.

Discussion then turned to the most expensive item of work; the roof. It was recognised that the Friend's report was less concerning than a previously received condition report, and estimated to be cheaper to resolve.

DS raised the point that work to the roof would probably necessitate full closure of the building for possibly several weeks, maybe months, and that consideration must be given to the fact that both regular and temporary users would be disbursed to other facilities within the area and it could be the case that, in some cases, because the alternative venues offer different amenities and accommodation such as parking, a choice of room size, carpeted floors, natural light etc. some regulars may not return and that although the roof was at the bottom of the 'to-do' list according to the time-line, it would be prudent to bring it to the top, at least for investigation as to what various types of repair might be available and what their impact on usage would be. This rather than spending the estimated £30,000 on lesser work first, only to possibly then suffer severe loss of use and revenue due to closing in order to spend another £25,000.

It was agreed that RCR offered unique facilities, preferred by many users and that major works could be scheduled for mid-summer to mid-autumn when patronage is low and that, as none of the identified work is urgent or necessary to continue the use of the hall, investigation of alternative remedies for the roof will be investigated first.