

MINUTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VERNON INSTITUTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held on 27 February 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor A Warrington

Mr B Huxley
Mr H Dobson

1 PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was held to consider the fabric of the Vernon Institute building and refurbishment and improvement works required in the short and long terms.

2 CURRENT SITUATION

The Vernon Institute was looking old and tired and in need of repair and upgrade. The Vernon Institute Management Committee (VIMC) had been hampered by cash flow problems over the last few years. It had been prudent and was now in a position to plan some improvement schemes and it had a contingency fund.

3 THE ROOF

There had been concerns raised over the state of the roof. Consequently, the VIMC had commissioned TERMINIX Property Services to carry out a free preliminary survey. A copy of the report that detailed the survey's findings was made available. It was noted that the survey had been of a non-disruptive nature.

Although the internal structure was fine, the roof coverings generally, were in poor condition and this had resulted in water stained timbers. The excessive moisture content of the timbers was sufficient to permit the germination of wood destroying fungi spores. TERMINIX recommended that the roof coverings be inspected and soundly repaired as necessary under separate contract.

As a result, Mr Brian Ebbrell had examined the roof and made the necessary repairs.

It was noted that TERMINIX had only inspected those exposed surfaces that were accessible at the time of its survey and it would not be prudent to regard such an inspection as totally reliable. If the VIMC needed to be more fully assured that there was no evidence of infestation or fungi infection TERMINIX would submit a quotation detailing the exposure work that would be required for a more detailed examination.

4 IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

(a) Ladies Toilets

There were damp patches in the Ladies Toilets. A further survey carried out by TERMINIX had identified that the surrounding external ground levels to the left and rear elevations were high in relation to the property's internal floor

construction. The effect was that this would form a bridge over the damp proof course that would allow ground moisture to penetrate the building. A copy of the report setting out this survey's findings was also made available.

(b) Damp Proof Course

TERMINIX had noted moisture readings at the base of various walls. A remedial damp proof course had been installed in the past and it had recommended that the VIMC contact the installing company for its comments. Visible signs of dampness and moisture profile readings indicated the presence of rising dampness to some walls. Mr Huxley was taking this matter forward

(c) Entrance Hall

The VIMC had agreed that one of its next projects was to refurbish the entrance hall. No quotations had been requested yet but Mr Huxley shared with the meeting the expected cost of the work to be undertaken.

(d) Exterior Decoration

The outside of the Vernon Institute building was in bad repair and the VIMC had agreed that the external decoration was a priority. The initial quotation to paint all faces of the building had been astronomical because of the road closure that would be necessary to decorate the Hermitage Road face.

Consequently, the VIMC had decided to seek further quotations for three sides excluding the Hermitage Road side and the Clock Tower.

5 PRIORITIES

Mr Huxley informed that the work identified was prioritised as follows:

- (1) Visual Impact – decoration of three sides of the Vernon Institute building.
- (2) Improvements to the entrance.
- (3) Improvements to the Ladies Toilets

6 GRANT AID OPPORTUNITIES

It was noted that the VIMC had not made any applications for external funding to assist the improvements necessary. It was **SUGGESTED** that quotations for the complete exterior decoration of the Vernon Institute building could be used to attract funding. It was **RECOMMENDED** that the VIMC should actively seek grant aid and make every attempt to exploit the funding opportunities available. Outside financial assistance was vital if the building was to be brought up to an appropriate standard befitting a village hall in the Twenty First Century.

7 CAPITAL

It was known that the VIMC had capital that it was unable to access to improve the fabric and refurbish the Vernon Institute building.

In view of the sad state of the Vernon Institute building, the need to decorate the exterior and the lack of funding to allow it all to be done, the Parish Council had **SUGGESTED** that it may be possible to get some capital released for improvements if the VIMC approached the Charities Commission and made out its case.

Mr Ray Dodd, Parish Halls Officer at the Cheshire Community Council, would be able to advise on how to make an application to draw capital down. It was **RECOMMENDED** that the VIMC should liaise with Mr Dodd.

Mr Huxley informed that he would contact Mr Dodd but his initial reaction was that he was reluctant to cash in investments. Discussions would be held with the VIMC and a view would be taken on whether to take the course of action suggested.

8 ROAD CLOSURE

Councillor Bailey reported that the District Highways Engineer had indicated that Hermitage Road was due to be resurfaced but as yet a firm date for the work had not been set. However, if the VIMC agreed to decorate the Hermitage Road face it could be done at the same time as the road resurfacing, over a weekend, at no extra cost as the road resurfacing would necessitate the road being closed anyway.

Mr Huxley agreed to contact the District Engineer and request that he ensure that the VIMC was informed in good time of when the road would be closed so that it could take advantage of this opportunity to carry out decoration on the fourth face if it wished.

9 PARISH COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION TO REFURBISHMENT WORKS

It was reported that the Parish Council had set up a fund to assist the VIMC to fund improvement projects. There was currently £3,043 in the fund and from 1 April 2003 another £1,000 would be made available. The Council was **RECOMMENDED** to release the majority of the funding set aside to assist the external decoration.

10 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor Bailey asked that the VIMC consider putting together an Improvement Plan to cover the next two to three years so that the Parish Council could budget in an informed way to assist further improvements required.

11 NEXT STEPS

The proceedings of this meeting would be reported and discussed at both the next Council and VIMC meetings. In due course, the Council would receive the Minutes of the VIMC setting out what actions it proposed to take to improve the village hall facility and hopefully an incremental Improvement Plan.