

# Hooe Parish Council

## Village Hall Project Committee Agenda

Telephone: 07548 528754  
Email: clerk@hooe-pc.gov.uk  
Website: www.hooe-pc.gov.uk  
Date: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

1 Thorne Farm Cottages  
Ninfield Road  
Bexhill on Sea  
East Sussex  
TN39 5JP

I hereby give notice that all Councillors are summoned to attend a Village Hall Project Committee meeting on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 7pm at the village hall when it is proposed to transact the business stated below.

Signed: **J. Warrener – Clerk (Proper Officer/RFO) to Hooe Parish Council**

### **Public Attendance**

The meeting will be conducted in accordance with Standing Orders and any person attending the meeting must abide by these rules. The Parish Council may choose to exclude a person under section 1(8) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 if a person fails to meet the standards and comply with the Chairman's requests.

### **Public Questions**

Public participation on matters on the agenda are at the Chairman's discretion. In accordance with Standing Orders 3(e-k), the session will last for no longer than 10 minutes with a person speaking for no longer than 2 minutes.

Any other question should be put in writing to the Clerk in advance of the next meeting. Any questions raised for items listed on the agenda that cannot be answered at the Council meeting will be brought forward to the next Council meeting for response.

End of public participation

### **Business To Be Transacted**

1. **To request for nominations and select a chairman for the Village Hall Project Committee**
2. **To request for nominations and select a vice chairman for the Village Hall Project Committee**
3. **To receive apologies and reasons for absence** in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 S85 (1)

#### 4. **Disclosure of Interests**

Interests in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Parish Council code of conduct.

To receive councillors' declarations of interest regarding matters on the agenda and consider any written requests or dispensation as a result. Any changes to register of interests should be notified to the clerk.

5. **Minutes of the Previous Meetings** to be agreed and signed as a true record.

To approve and sign the minutes of the Village Hall Project Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 as a true record.

### **Matters For Consideration and Resolution**

6. **To discuss and agree the Terms of Reference for the Village Hall Project Committee**
7. **To consider the future of the village hall following the results of the community consultation and agree any actions required.**

In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 all attendees of the meeting are hereby notified that the meeting will be recorded as an aide memoire for the clerk when compiling the minutes. The recordings are held securely and are deleted after the resolution that the minutes are a true and correct record. Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council or one of its committees or sub-committees will be deemed as the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present. A person or persons recording the parish meeting are reminded that the "Public Session" period may not be part of the formal meeting and that they should take legal advice for themselves as to their rights to make any recording during that period.

# HOOE PARISH COUNCIL

## Terms of Reference for the Village Hall Project Committee

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Village Hall Project Committee is constituted to review the long-term use of the village hall and to adopt and implement a plan of action.

### 2. GOVERNANCE OF THE VILLAGE HALL PROJECT COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall comprise of all members of the Parish Council
- 2.2 The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Parish Council shall be members of the Village Hall Project Committee in an ex-officio capacity.
- 2.3 The Village Hall Project Committee may choose to appoint a non-councillor to the Village Hall Project Committee under section 102 (3) of the Local Government Act. Any non-councillor appointed will have no voting rights.
- 2.4 A non-councillor may only be appointed to the Village Hall Project Committee if the non councillor meets the terms of section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972, failure to meet these requirements will result in the disqualification of the non councillor to undertake the role (all councillors are required to meet this obligation as part of their declaration of office).
- 2.5 Any councillor or non-councillor appointed to this committee shall make a declaration to include the requirements of section 2.4 of this document, and shall accept an undertaking that by participating in this committee, the councillor or non-councillor shall agree to the obligations set out as follows:
- To accept and work within the parish council's standing orders, regulations, policies, procedures and other statutes as imposed by law.
  - To accept any work undertaken is pro bono, is not confidential unless stated by law, or subject to copy right, as the sole purpose of the committee is to deliver the objectives set out by this committee for the benefit of the residents of Hooe parish.
- 2.6 The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Village Hall Project Committee shall be elected by the membership at the first committee meeting following the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting.
- 2.7 The Village Hall Project Committee shall approve and review the terms of reference annually following the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting.
- 2.8 The Village Hall Project Committee shall be constituted each year at the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting.

### 3. QUORUM

- 3.1 The quorum shall consist of a minimum of three members.

#### **4. POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall have the powers to determine on all matters set out in this document including any financial considerations.

#### **5. VILLAGE HALL PROJECT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 5.1 The Village Hall Project Committee shall determine whether to keep and renovate or sell the village hall following consideration of the results of the community consultation, public feedback, studies and reports undertaken to date.
- 5.2 To agree a plan of action for the option determined by the Village Hall Project Committee and implement the plan.
- 5.3 All information relating to the village hall options shall be published on the Parish Council's website for public information.

#### **6. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The Village Hall Project Committee meeting will be open to members of the public to attend. The members of the public may be allowed to speak for 2 minutes in accordance with the parish council's standing order 3g on matters (not classed as confidential) as set out on the agenda at the public section of the committee meeting.

#### **7. MEETINGS**

The Village Hall Project Committee meetings will only be convened when business is required to be transacted.

# Index to sheets in this file

Sheet Name	Page 1	Contents
<b>Balanced</b>	<b>Pages 2/3</b>	Shows projected budget and precept changes to achieve a budget 2025/26 not drawing on reserves
<b>Balanced with Loan</b>	<b>Pages 4/5</b>	Shows projected budget and precept changes to achieve a budget 2025/26 not drawing on reserves AND a £100K PW Loan commencing in Year 2026/27
<b>Breakdown 31May24</b>	<b>Page 6</b> <b>Page 7</b>	One Page Financial Summary as at 31 May 24 One Page Projection to End of Financial Year
<b>Available Reserves May24</b>	<b>Page 8</b>	One Page Visual Guide to Reserves Position as at 31 May 24

# HOOE PARISH COUNCIL - 3 YR BUDGET and PRECEPT PROJECTIONS for BALANCED BUDGET

## Assumptions:

Current budget, costs and income increases only by inflation

Tax base does not change

No Reserves used to balance budget from 2025/26

No other project costs factored in from 2025/26, assumes they will all be self funding (Grants or EMR)

	2021/22	2022/23	Budget Set 2023/24	Budget Set 2024/25	Use Inflation <b>2.5%</b> <b>Projection</b> <b>2025/26</b> balanced	Projection 2026/27 balanced	Projection 2027/28 balanced
<b>TOTAL BUDGET/EXPENDITURE &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 41,519	£ 45,712	£ 46,855	£ 48,026	£ 49,227
<b>LOAN &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>							
<b>LESS INCOME &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 4,020	£ 6,329	£ 6,487	£ 6,649	£ 6,815
<b>TOTAL FUNDS REQUIRED &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 37,499	£ 39,383	£ 40,368	£ 41,377	£ 42,412
<b>FROM RESERVES CHOSEN &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 6,500	£ 4,400	£ -	£ -	£ -
<b>TOTAL PRECEPT SET &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	£ 30,010	£ 32,000	£ 30,999	£ 34,983	£ 40,368	£ 41,377	£ 42,412
<b>CHANGE % &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	10.1%*	6.6%	-3.1%	12.9%	15.4%	2.5%	2.5%
<b>CPI INFLATION % (To prior Oct) &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	0.7%	4.1%	11.1%	4.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
<b>Band-D</b>	£ 144.21	£ 154.66	£ 148.53	£ 166.27	£ 191.86	£ 196.66	£ 201.58
<b>Tax Base</b>	208.1	206.9	208.7	210.4	210.4	210.4	210.4

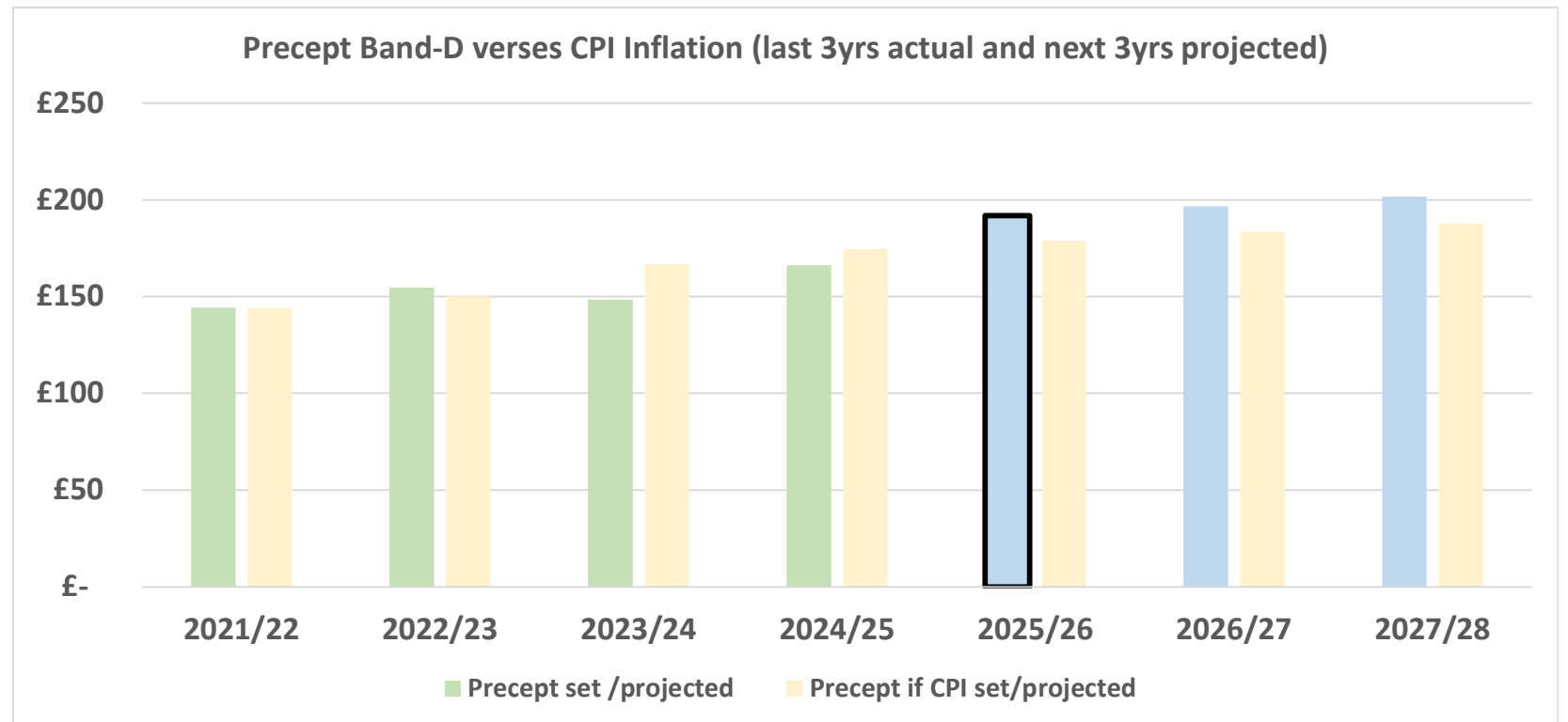
## Notes:

\* Precept increase between 2019/20 and 2021/22 averaged out due to precept charge error

# HOOE PARISH COUNCIL - 3 YR BUDGET and PRECEPT PROJECTIONS for BALANCED BUDGET

## Full Breakdown by Bands

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Band-A	£ 96.14	£ 103.11	£ 99.02	£ 110.85	£ 127.91	£ 131.11	£ 134.39
Band-B	£ 112.16	£ 120.29	£ 115.52	£ 129.32	£ 149.22	£ 152.96	£ 156.78
Band-C	£ 128.19	£ 137.48	£ 132.03	£ 147.80	£ 170.54	£ 174.81	£ 179.18
Band-D	£ 144.21	£ 154.66	£ 148.53	£ 166.27	£ 191.86	£ 196.66	£ 201.58
Band-E	£ 176.26	£ 189.03	£ 181.54	£ 203.22	£ 234.50	£ 240.36	£ 246.38
Band-F	£ 208.30	£ 223.40	£ 214.54	£ 240.17	£ 277.13	£ 284.06	£ 291.17
Band-G	£ 240.35	£ 257.77	£ 247.55	£ 277.12	£ 319.77	£ 327.77	£ 335.97
Band-H	£ 288.42	£ 309.32	£ 297.06	£ 332.54	£ 383.72	£ 393.32	£ 403.16



# HOOE PARISH COUNCIL - 3 YR BUDGET and PRECEPT PROJECTIONS for BALANCED BUDGET & LOAN

## Assumptions:

Current budget, costs and income increases only by inflation

Tax base does not change

No Reserves used to balance budget from 2025/26

No other project costs factored in from 2025/26, assumes they will all be self funding (Grants or EMR)

**PWLB loan £100K taken 1Apr26 over 25years at 5.43%\*\* fixed annuity, first repay 1Oct26, annual cost**

**£ 7,358 pa, £34.97 pa per band-D property**

Use Inflation

	2021/22	2022/23	Budget Set 2023/24	Budget Set 2024/25	2.5%		
					Projection 2025/26 balanced	Projection 2026/27 balanced+loan	Projection 2027/28 balanced+loan
<b>TOTAL BUDGET/EXPENDITURE &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 41,519	£ 45,712	£ 46,855	£ 48,026	£ 49,227
<b>LOAN &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>						£ 7,358	£ 7,358
<b>LESS INCOME &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 4,020	£ 6,329	£ 6,487	£ 6,649	£ 6,815
<b>TOTAL FUNDS REQUIRED &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 37,499	£ 39,383	£ 40,368	£ 48,735	£ 49,770
<b>FROM RESERVES CHOSEN &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>			£ 6,500	£ 4,400	£ -	£ -	£ -
<b>TOTAL PRECEPT SET &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	£ 30,010	£ 32,000	£ 30,999	£ 34,983	£ 40,368	£ 48,735	£ 49,770
<b>CHANGE % &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	10.1%*	6.6%	-3.1%	12.9%	15.4%	20.7%	2.1%
<b>CPI INFLATION % (To prior Oct) &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	0.7%	4.1%	11.1%	4.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
<b>Band-D</b>	£ 144.21	£ 154.66	£ 148.53	£ 166.27	£ 191.86	£ 231.63	£ 236.55
<b>Tax Base</b>	208.1	206.9	208.7	210.4	210.4	210.4	210.4

## Notes:

\* Precept increase between 2019/20 and 2021/22 averaged out due to precept charge error

\*\* Interest rate would not be known until loan agreed, rate used as at 10Jun24 - actual rate may be higher or lower

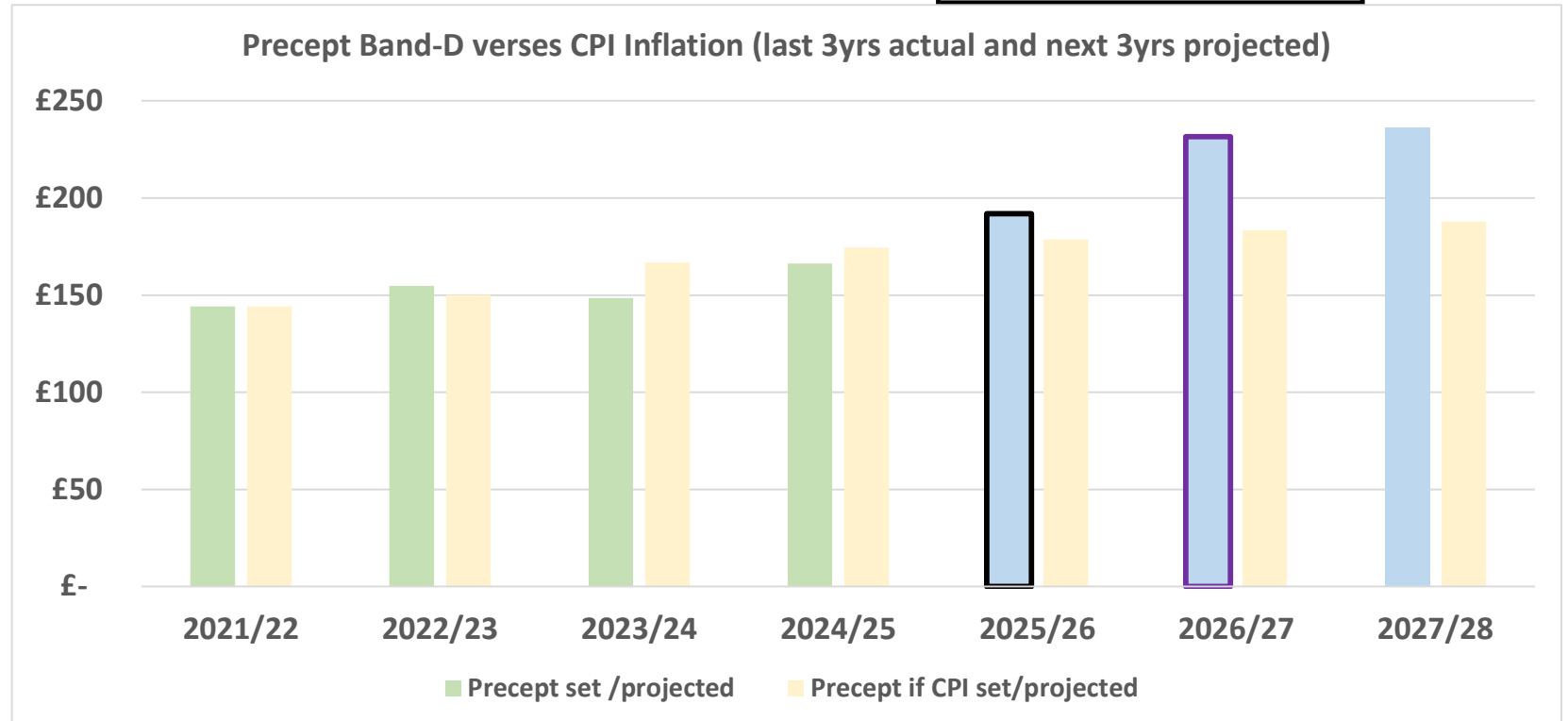
<b>Two-year Precept increase</b>
<b>39.3%</b>

# HOOE PARISH COUNCIL - 3 YR BUDGET and PRECEPT PROJECTIONS for BALANCED BUDGET

## Full Breakdown by Bands

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Band-A	£ 96.14	£ 103.11	£ 99.02	£ 110.85	£ 127.91	£ 154.42	£ 157.70
Band-B	£ 112.16	£ 120.29	£ 115.52	£ 129.32	£ 149.22	£ 180.16	£ 183.98
Band-C	£ 128.19	£ 137.48	£ 132.03	£ 147.80	£ 170.54	£ 205.89	£ 210.27
Band-D	£ 144.21	£ 154.66	£ 148.53	£ 166.27	£ 191.86	£ 231.63	£ 236.55
Band-E	£ 176.26	£ 189.03	£ 181.54	£ 203.22	£ 234.50	£ 283.10	£ 289.12
Band-F	£ 208.30	£ 223.40	£ 214.54	£ 240.17	£ 277.13	£ 334.58	£ 341.68
Band-G	£ 240.35	£ 257.77	£ 247.55	£ 277.12	£ 319.77	£ 386.05	£ 394.25
Band-H	£ 288.42	£ 309.32	£ 297.06	£ 332.54	£ 383.72	£ 463.26	£ 473.10

<b>Two-year Band-D increase</b>	
£	<b>65.36</b>





# Summary of Financial position as at 31 May 24

## HOOE PARISH COUNCIL 2024/25

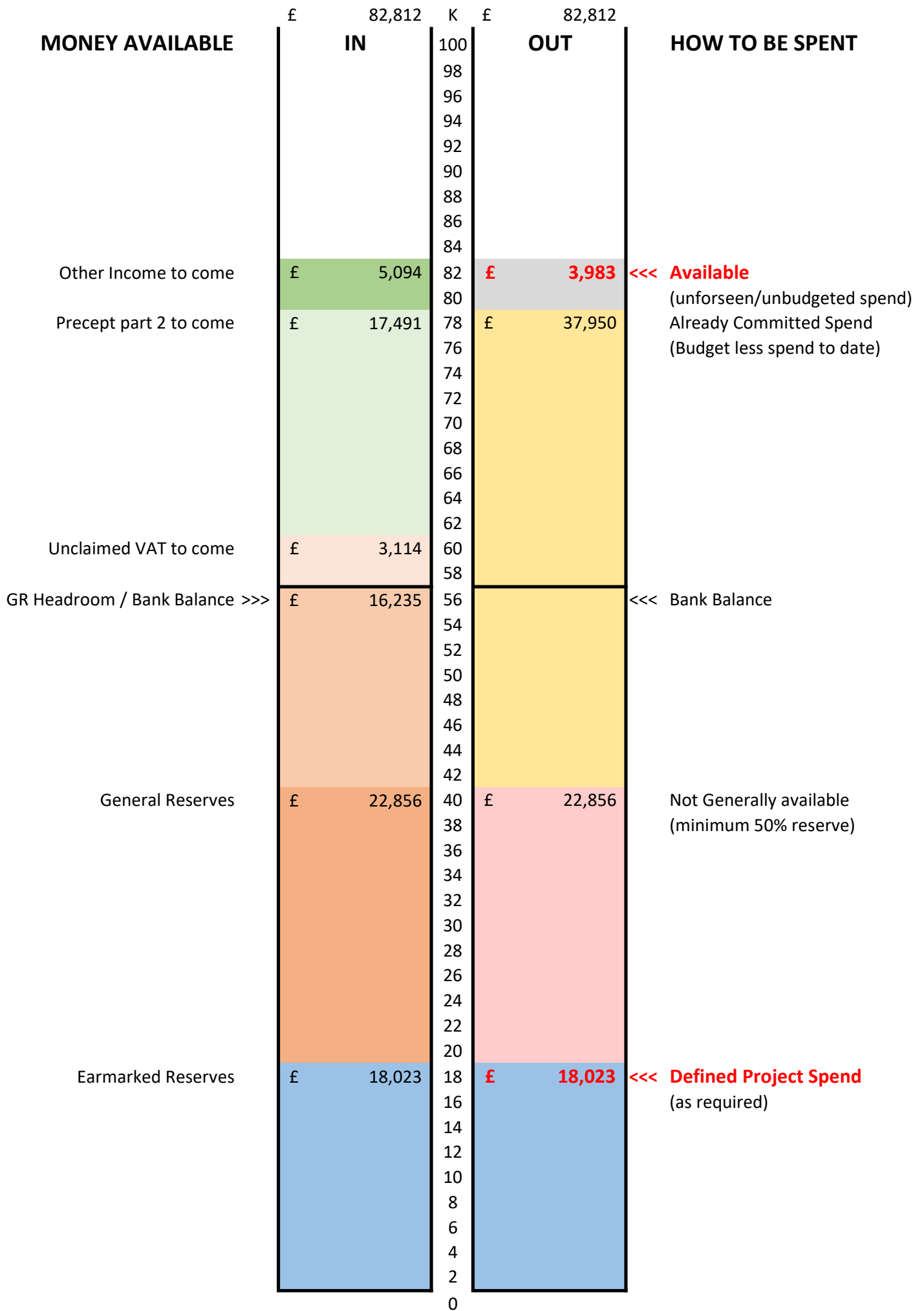
	Bank Balance	Earmarked Reserves	General Reserves	Source of information/Date of report
<b>Bank Accounts Total</b>	<b>£57,113.76</b>			Bank - Cash & Inv Reconciliation 31/5/24
2 Barclays Current	£0.00			
5 Unity Trust Current	£1,416.17			
6 Unity Trust Savings (interest bearing)	£55,697.59			
<b>Earmarked Reserves</b>		<b>£18,023.11</b>		Earmarked Reserves 31/5/24
321 Villager Hall Public Donations		£14,712.64		
322 Village Hall Funding		£0.00		
324 Youth Money		£1,555.10		
326 New Water Supply		£0.00		
329 Allotment Deposit		£400.00		
330 Allotment Refurbishment changed after 29/9		£0.00		
338 Donations		£0.00		
390 CIL (planning income)		£1,355.37		
<b>General Reserves</b>			<b>£32,284.59</b>	Nominal Ledger 310 31/5/24
Receipts less payments			<b>£6,806.06</b>	Detailed Receipts & Payments 31/5/24
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL POSITION NOW</b>	<b>£57,113.76</b>	<b>£18,023.11</b>	<b>£39,090.65</b>	<i>Control line agrees</i>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>£45,712.00</b>		<b>£22,856.00</b>	<b>Above Minimum level GR required</b>

# Projected Financial position to End of Financial year

## HOOE PARISH COUNCIL 2024/25

	Bank Balance	Earmarked Reserves	General Reserves	Source of information/Date of report
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL POSITION 31 May</b>	<b>£57,113.76</b>	<b>£18,023.11</b>	<b>£39,090.65</b>	<i>Control line agrees</i>
<b>Receipts to come</b>	<b>£25,698.67</b>		<b>£25,698.67</b>	
Precept Part 2 - Oct	£17,491.00			Detailed Receipts & Payments 31/5/24
Income budgetted not yet received	£5,094.00			Detailed Receipts & Payments 31/5/24
CIL	£0.00			
Other	£0.00			
VAT Refunds accrued, claimed and not yet paid	£0.00			
VAT Refunds accrued but not claimed	£3,113.67			VAT account position 31/5/24
<b>Spending to come (GR)</b>	<b>-£37,950.00</b>		<b>-£37,950.00</b>	Detailed Receipts & Payments 31/5/24
Budget not spent	-£35,950.00			
Solicitors	-£2,000.00			Final Solicitors Bill est over budget
Other	£0.00			
<b>Spending to come (EMR)</b>	<b>-£1,000.00</b>	<b>-£1,000.00</b>		
321 Villager Hall Public Donations	£0.00			
324 Youth Money	£0.00			
390 CIL (planning income)	-£1,000.00			Parish Farm Fencing
<b>TOTAL FINANCIAL POSITION EOY</b>	<b>£43,862.43</b>	<b>£17,023.11</b>	<b>£26,839.32</b>	
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>£45,712.00</b>		<b>£22,856.00</b>	<b>Minimum level GR required (50%)</b>
<b>AVAILABLE GENERAL RESERVES</b>			<b>£3,983.32</b>	

# Available Reserves position (31 May 24 to EOFY)



# Community Consultation – Future of HOOE VILLAGE HALL

## 5.14 Residents Correspondence and Responses during consultation period

The following correspondence and responses, in full, made to resident's correspondence during the consultation period are published here. To avoid publishing other resident's opinion, criticism or any incorrect or misleading statements during the consultation period only parts of the response that was deemed relevant and useful for all to see and not prejudicial to the consultation were published in document 5.13. The council has decided to fully publish (in anonymity) all correspondence and replies now the consultation period has ended.

**12 residents emailed and received the following responses during and after the consultation period.**

### Resident 1 correspondence 4Apr24, verified

=====

Hello; I'm a resident of Hooe and have just received the options newsletter. I do not want the hall to close but I also do not want to pay an extra £900 a year on my council tax which is already over £300 per 10-month period. If there was a Hooe Village Hall Facebook/web site where anyone wanting to use the hall would easily access booking then maybe more people would use it. I will be retiring in mid-July so can spend time on such events as a vinyl record evening, Mod/punk/ska/disco/pop DJ evenings, open mic nights, band practice, Burns night, to think of a few. I do not think £10 an hour is extortionate for the hire of the hall. Maybe some events could be run alongside our local pub too. I hope I'm not left to just vote close due to my financial status upon retirement. Regards

=====

### Resident 1 full response 4Apr24

=====

*Thank you for your email.*

*I believe you have misunderstood the information you have read.*

*The £854 per band-D council taxpayer quoted is the cost over the example 25-year timescale - if the council did raise £100,000 over 25 years this alone could increase the Hooe council tax bill element by £34 per year for each of the 25 years (£854 divided by 25 years) unless the council found other funds to pay for the loan repayments.*

*Please note, this **does not imply** the council will borrow £100,000 or choose a 25-year repayment timescale, the amounts, timescale, interest rates and precept effect could be more or less at the time - but we have to give an example to show the long-term liability that could fall to taxpayers of Hooe.*

*I hope this answers your question.*

=====

### Resident 1 further correspondence 4Apr24, verified

=====

Just had a word with my wife, we both thought the accompanying letter was confusing and may put others off voting for the hall to stay. Would it be possible to make it clear to everyone how much would be added each year to the council tax for how many years? Cheers

=====  
**Resident 1 further full response 4Apr24**  
=====

*The Parish Council are required to illustrate the potential effect on council taxpayers, but we are only in a position to give an example as no firm decisions have been made on the exact nature of any renovations or improvements and the council have stated what they might consider doing.*

*The main purpose of this consultation is to gauge resident's preferences on which of the two options they would like council to explore at this time.*

*We have strived to make it clear that a significant part of renovation costs are likely to end up on our council taxpayers' bills although we will explore grants and other funding as a priority but they are never guaranteed. Without the example statement, it could equally mislead readers in believing that the Keep and Renovate option is without significant cost implication, this might sway voters, in the opposite way you suggest that the inclusion of the statement might put off voters from that option.*

*The council believe the summary statements are fair and balanced.*

*I hope this clarifies the position.*

=====  
**Resident 1 further correspondence 4Apr24, verified**  
=====

Hello Jane; Many thanks for the prompt response and clarification. That has swayed me to the keep the hall vote. If the Hall does stay, I'd be happy to run a Facebook site for information and chat. Cheers

=====

**Resident 2 correspondence 4Apr24, verified**

Clerk!

Make sure the letter includes details of the viable option for relocating a new village hall at the Hooe rec site is declared as a realistic alternative.

**Resident 2 full response 17Apr24**

*Thank you for your email.*

*May I refer you to the minutes of the Village Hall Project Committee at [www.Hooe-PC.gov.uk/village-hall-project/](http://www.Hooe-PC.gov.uk/village-hall-project/) Document "5.02 Village Hall Project Committee minutes 12.02.24" where you will find the discussion and motion passed unanimously by the council to reject the building of a new village hall on the recreation ground. You will also find all the supporting documentation at that location that the council used to inform that decision. Hence, this is why that option does not appear on the consultation paper.*

*I hope this clarifies the position.*

**Resident 2 correspondence 18Apr24, verified**

The Village Hall issue needs to be raised with the local population is made fully aware of all reasons that such a ridiculous decision was dubiously 'railroaded'.

That way the most sensible conclusion for the fairest long-term benefit to us all can be achieved.

Thanks!

**Resident 2 no further response 18Apr24**

**Correspondence 8Apr24 – source not verifiable/No response**

**Subject:** *How dare you try to close the village hall*

*Isn't the village hall a memorial to first world war soldiers? You are not in a position to close it*

*Yours*

## Residents 3&4 joint correspondence 9Apr24, verified

=====

### **Open letter to the Hooe Parish Council**

We have received the Parish Council 'Consultation Papers'.

**We are both of the opinion a village hall is central to the life of the community, any thought of closing and selling for development would be a travesty.**

This action would be counter mount to letting the residents down and letting the village die. Whilst the hall is not used very much at present it has been well used in the past and will be again in the future when residents are again encouraged and made welcomed. That is not the case at present.

It would appear from reading your paper and looking at the return form, that the Parish Council has already made its decision. It seems very clear that is to close the Hall permanently and sell the land.

1. It is stated that the results are not binding. So why go to the expense of preparing documents, having them delivered by post, producing banners etc. if this is an empty exercise? What is your reasoning? Are you ticking boxes in the hope that you will be able to strengthen any grant application by stating you have consulted with the residents?
2. The PC has only offered 2 alternative options and there is no opportunity on the form to make comments. The questions are too black and white to be able to answer thoroughly and therefore will not give a complete and true picture of the views of residents. There is no way the Council can be informed fully by simple tick or cross answers to these questions. Why are you wasting everyone's time and money?
3. The hall is not used at present because the Parish Council has made it difficult for local groups to enjoy it. The rules and regulations which have been imposed, and the high rental costs make it unaffordable and unwelcoming.
4. In addition, the sudden closure of the hall for months was an action that all other parishes and hall organisers always avoid at all costs. History has proved that clubs, societies and organisations need to find an alternative venue when their usual venue is suddenly unavailable. Often, having been let down once, these clubs and organisations are reluctant to return to a newly opened venue as all trust is lost. This is the reason the hall is underused at present; local clubs and societies have lost confidence, and some have decided to make their temporary venues permanent.
5. Apart from St Oswald's Church which has proved to be the saving of Community activity in the village, a Village Hall is the only building where residents may meet together and socialise. Without a hall community spirit dies. I hope you will recall and have taken into consideration the fact Children's parties, charity dinners, beetle drives, anniversary parties, dance and exercise classes are just a few of the activities which have happened in the hall in addition to committee meetings of groups and organisation.
6. Sadly, the financial record of the Council is not great. It would now appear your wish is to rush forward without even producing a robust business plan. Whilst this would normally be disturbing for any organisation, it is more so for a Parish Council that is spending money raised from local council tax. These funds are Parish funds, not Parish Council funds, and this fact should be remembered at all times.
7. We find it shocking that you closed the hall, spent many thousands of £s on it, apparently all without a long-term business plan. Then, once you reopened it, nothing appears to have been done

to promote it to the people of the village and beyond. And now you want to close it! Such a waste of Hooe residents' money.

**We are both of the opinion a village hall is central to the life of the community, any thought of closing and selling for development would be a travesty.**

=====

### **Resident 3&4 full response 11Apr24**

=====

*Thank you for your email which has been noted by councillors. We have responded to your questions and any statements or inferences you have made that are false.*

*It is our intention during the consultation to publish the answers to questions from residents that may be of key significance to the community consultation on the website during the consultation period, such as any clarification sought or potential misinterpretation of the documents.*

*The Parish Council will not publish the contents or the response if it contains your personal opinion or the potential to misinform, mislead or misdirect the outcome of the consultation such as criticism of legitimate council decision or policy.*

*Each response to you below is categorised and only those deemed seeking key clarification will be published. No responses to you have been deemed for wider publication.*

*Please see document 5.13 Consultation - Responses to Questions answered at [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project).*

#### **Response to Preamble (Personal opinion, False inference, no question)**

*Your inferences that the council has already decided, and the consultation is an empty exercise are false. As you know, a decision has not been made until the council make it - I can confirm no motion has been passed to close and sell the Hall or otherwise. I can confirm, all meetings are held in public and on the record, no private meetings or groups of individual councillors get together to make decisions, as that would be illegal. It is up to each individual councillor to vote on this, it is for each of them to decide given the breadth of information they have now amassed on this project, and ultimately with the result of this consultation. All information is available on the website to everyone, nothing is kept back from voters.*

*At the February meeting of the Village Hall Project Committee, councillors voted unanimously to consult the community, pay for promotion of it to ensure a wide participation and gave their reasoning - which you can establish from the minutes available on the website. I'm sure you are aware no former council ever asked the community in this way and provided the necessary depth of financial implications and usage analysis.*

#### **Response to 1 (False inference of an empty exercise, 3 questions)**

*The statement about not binding on the council is a formality - as you know only the members of the council makes an actual decision based on many factors only one of which is the community response or desire to do something. It would have been inappropriate to imply whatever the community says will definitely happen; the parish council could never have guaranteed that.*

*Your inference that the consultation is an empty exercise is false. The council has most of the financial, technical and legal points answered about how they could proceed, what they don't have is a fuller picture of the communities wish regarding the future of the hall. Although meetings seem well attended, there is never more than 10% of the electorate at meetings and many do not offer their*



views. A previous attempt at a consultation, which you are aware of, received only 39 subjective comments. The parish council has a duty to establish the actual views of the wider community, particularly those who up to now may be unaware of the situation and uninformed on key matters such as financial implications for them.

Community support is a key element to any application for a grant or public works loan - without the result of this consultation the council would be unable to comply with these conditions and therefore may not be able to decide to Keep and Renovate without substantial community input. I'm sure you appreciate any council which decides to spend a significant amount of taxpayer's money should at least know they have a mandate to do it.

**Response to 2 (Criticism of council decision/policy, Personal Opinion, 1 question)**

At this stage the parish council is seeking a simple direction from the community. If we were to try to present in advance a complex variety of possibilities of what we might do and obtain the detailed costs of all these options, it was felt this would over complicate what in essence is a simple decision - does the community want the council to keep the hall (with a few sensible suggestions for improvements) at not an insignificant cost or does the community feel that money is better in their pockets over the long-term.

As for allowing further comments on the consultation form, any member of the community, at any time can forward their comments to the council, as indeed you have just done. We have received many already and each one will help inform councillors in their decisions. Councillors have seen the detailed results of a previous "comment" based consultation carried out and were concerned that the parish council had to infer and make a subjective decision on many comments - some weren't classifiable as for or against – the parish council wanted to avoid this and just receive a single clear preference.

The costs of the consultation are approx. £5 per household. Considering that should the renovation option be enacted, each of these households could face a total long-term financial liability 100-200 times or more that amount, it was felt that this was value for money. I'm sure you know that any council spending that kind of money has a fiduciary duty to ensure everyone is informed of that possibility.

**Response to 3 (Criticism of past council decisions/policy, no question).**

You do not quantify how the council has made it difficult for local groups to enjoy it. It is currently available for hire 7 days a week at £10 per hour (possibly free to charities or for local activities by council discretion) - this is in line with local halls with similar facilities. The hall has all the legal certificates and insurance; rules governing hiring are typically the same you would face going anywhere else to hire a space.

The council is fully aware that the lack of parking is a serious barrier to hiring, that is why this is likely to be priority number one for improvements to support increased use. You also know the fiduciary duty on the council, and the financial pressure on many councils nationwide mean we cannot leave an empty building that is costing money without questioning its long-term viability.

You do not define how a building gives the vibes of being unwelcoming - I can agree the 4ft of black mould appearing on the inside walls in winter months due to lack of use and necessary long-term maintenance justifies your comment. I'm sure you agree this may constitute a health and safety hazard and is a significant reason why the current slow decline of the building condition cannot be maintained for much longer.

The parish council provides the facility - it is up to the community to use it - at present use is very low.

**Response to 4 (Personal Opinion, no question)**

*The closure of the hall was down to legal requirements not previously being met. You cannot legally have public use of any building without valid fire, electrical and insurance. The condition of the building was partly down to previous council's cutting back on spending so it could be preserved for a new build. Now that option has been formally rejected by the parish council, suddenly, you suggest it is the fault of the council why the existing building was unavailable.*

*Community groups have been contacted for comment on what it would take to return to the village hall - the arguments are those you'd expect - parking and kitchen facilities are the main two, hence the planned improvements. If community groups and other users find alternative facilities locally, that is to be welcomed too. All local venues have desperate funding issues for their premises and facilities - but Hooe Village hall is the only one within a 6-mile radius that is paid for by local taxpayers. They have to be considered too.*

**Response to 5 (Personal Opinion, no question).**

*The activities you refer to can all come back if the community wishes to organise them and approach the council for support. The council does not have the resources to promote, run and organise all community events. There has been an overwhelming request by the residents attending the Village Hall Project Committee meetings for the voluntary groups to return to using the village hall, particularly the coffee mornings, and that has not happened, and the residents should be given an explanation why. You suggest without a village hall the community spirit dies, maybe the community groups should consider the views of the local community that are crying out for them to return to the village hall. The village hall cannot be the hub of the village if no one is using it.*

**Response to 6 (Criticism of council decisions, no question).**

*The Clerk to the parish council and Responsible Finance officer has spent the last 2 years getting to grips with the financial affairs of the council, which according to auditors were in serious breach of many legal and regulatory requirements. Accounts are now fully audited, published and all our statutory obligations are correctly satisfied. The poor financial record that you imply is correct but is not isolated or limited to any one manifestation of the many past councils but collectively and over time many former councils and councillors failed in their fiduciary duties. It has been costly and taken a lot of time to get to the position where we are now and a three-year financial plan will shortly be underway for the first time, so it will now be possible for councillors to make informed financial decisions for the future of the village hall and other projects.*

**Response to 7 (Personal Opinion, Criticism of council decisions/policy, no question)**

*Once again, answers to Response 4,5,6 apply.  
I hope this clarifies the Parish Council's position.  
Kind Regards*

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## **Resident 5 correspondence 4Apr24, verified**

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To Hooe Parish Clerk and Councillors,

Re: HP Village Hall – Prejudicial Public Consultation Paper

I am in receipt today, Thursday 4 April 2024, of the Community Consultation on the future of the Hooe Village Hall (HVH) voting paper.

As anticipated, the voting paper has ignored the views of residents expressed before, and at, the last meeting of the Village Hall Project Committee (VHPC), held on 11/03/24, which was to keep the HVH as is. The Hooe Parish Council (HPC) have also ignored residents' requests to view and discuss the content of the consultation. The Consultation Paper (CP) has only two extreme options on which to vote. As such the CP is prejudicial against residents wishes with one option proposing "Keep and Renovate" or the other option to "Close and Sell" the HVH.

The term 'renovate' and or 'renovation' has been used by the HPC in VHPC meetings as the de facto option, but the term is not defined on the CP. However, the CP notes refer to the need to obtain government grants or loans for such works - an expensive exercise in itself. The term renovate (to restore to a good state of repair) is incorrectly applied in the current context as it is understood the proposal includes items such as new building works, improvements, enhancements, extension(s), new kitchen and a new car park.

The example given in the CP of a loan of £100,000 over 25 years refers to a cost to a council taxpayer (band D) of £854, but the CP does not state if this cost is annual or is it the total cost for the 25 years loan period?

The CP notes that "the usage of HVH has been very low for some time and the HPC does not foresee any significant increase in the use" – so why is there a need by the HPC for expensive and extensive 'renovation' without any strategy to initiate more usage?

The 'renovate' option has not been properly discussed with residents as it includes a variety of extensive and costly proposals. Contrary to Local Government guidelines the HPC have not sufficiently engaged or discussed with residents the purpose and content of the CP issued.

The CP should include at the very least an affordable middle third option of 'Keep and Maintain' which has been raised by residents, and which appears to have been supported by some councillors. This option would not require any additional monies to be obtained by government loans or grants as the costs of annual maintenance could be contained in a reasonably costed Precept. Any improvements, enhancements or additions to the HVH should be kept separate from the basic 'Keep and Maintain' - which would include the necessary maintenance to keep it operational.

By only having the two extreme options on which to vote, the HPC are forcing those residents who wish to keep the HVH, to also vote for extensive 'renovation'; thereby giving the HPC carte blanche to undertake whatever modifications and improvements that they want without further recourse to residents input. The same can be said if the number of returned CP's do not meet the required "weight of support" which again will allow the HPC to carry out whatever they want.

The CP states that it is an informal consultation and that the outcome is not binding. Thus, the only purpose the CP would seem to have is to allow the HPC to apply for government loans or grants for 'renovation' works which have not been discussed with residents. Therefore, is not this CP a waste of time and money?

It seems to me that the HPC have not moved any further forward on the issue of the HVH from Cllr Crawhurst's report 'Appraisal of Options for Hooe Village Hall' dated April 2023.

Regards

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## **Resident 5 full response 12Apr24**

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*Thank you for your email which has been noted by all councillors. We have responded to your questions and any statements or inferences you have made that are false.*

*It is our intention during the consultation to publish the answers to questions from residents that may be of key significance to the community consultation on the website during the consultation period, such as any clarification sought or potential misinterpretation of the documents.*

*The Parish Council will not publish the contents or the response if it contains your personal opinion or the potential to misinform, mislead or misdirect the outcome of the consultation such as criticism of legitimate council decision or policy.*

*Each response to you below is categorised and only those deemed seeking key clarification will be published. Two responses to you have been deemed for wider publication, one already has been asked by other residents.*

*Please see document 5.13 Consultation - Responses to Questions answered at [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project).*

### **Response to paragraph 2 (Criticism of consultation scope, no question)**

*The building is well over 110 years old and has no significant TLC for many years, the council has a legal obligation to manage council assets appropriately. The council does not wish to get into a position where the building must close and further significant maintenance carried out if the community do not want to pay for it or use it anymore.*

*The parish council has most of the financial, technical and legal points answered about how they could proceed, what they don't have is a fuller picture of the communities wish regarding the future of the hall. You suggest we have ignored views expressed before, is this false. Although meetings seem well attended and views are expressed, they are not the only views. There is never more than 10% of the electorate at meetings and many do not offer their views. To limit our decision making to only the views we hear at meetings, or those who shout loudest via email, would be democratically unacceptable to most people. A previous attempt at a consultation received only 39 subjective comments. The parish council has a duty to establish the actual views of the wider community, particularly those who up to now may be unaware of the situation and uninformed on key matters such as financial implications for them.*

*Your comment regarding restricting the residents' prior access to the consultation document is answered in the set of minutes from 11<sup>th</sup> March, to which you refer.*

*At this stage the parish council is seeking a simple direction from the community. If we were to try to present in advance a complex variety of possibilities of what we might do and obtain the detailed costs of all these options, it was felt this would over complicate what in essence is a simple decision - does the community want the council to keep the hall (with a few sensible suggestions for improvements) at not an insignificant cost or does the community feel that money is better in their pockets over the long-term.*

*Ultimately, it is now up to those in the community who challenge and lobby the parish council to keep the facility to start to demonstrate how they will help achieve and maintain increased use in the long-term, not just turn up and say so at meetings. The parish council have sought opinion from community*

groups and others that use other facilities, such as the Church, what it would take to return and use the hall and the council is disappointed by the response and lack of engagement.

Ultimately, the council has a fiduciary duty to ensure money is spent wisely, appropriately and offers value for the taxpayers' money and have voiced this concern several times in previous public meetings about the implications of the lack of community use. The consultation paperwork clearly spells out the situation cannot continue as is.

**Response to paragraph 3 (Criticism of language, no question)**

Irrespective of the textbook definition of the word "renovate", the summary document clearly lays out the proposed intentions under the Keep and Renovate option. It spells out clearly the likely improvements that will be considered and the council have stated in the preamble it cannot allow the continued decline of the current building any longer, closure could be forced any day due to a failure of or in the building. The 4ft of black mould that appeared on inside walls this winter almost was almost a reason to temporarily close it again.

**Response to paragraph 4 (Example costs clarification question - this response has been published already)**

The £854 per band-D council taxpayer quoted is the cost over the example 25-year timescale - if the council did raise £100,000 over 25 years this alone could increase the Hooe council tax bill element by £34 per year for each of the 25 years (£854 divided by 25 years) unless the parish council found other funds to pay for the loan repayments.

Please note, this does not imply the parish council will borrow £100,000 or choose a 25-year repayment timescale, the amounts, timescale, interest rates and precept effect could be more or less at the time - but we have to give an example to show the long-term liability that could fall to taxpayers of Hooe.

**Response to paragraph 5 (Increasing use question - this response will be published)**

The parish council have clearly outlined what improvements (parking, kitchen upgrade) will likely promote increased use. Whether this will increase community use or just attract outsiders is unknown and could never be quantified. Whether it will be sufficient to justify the expense and determine the appropriate levels of that expense have not been decided and will be a factor for councillors to consider alongside the results of the community vote.

All the activities that have happened in the past can all come back if the community wishes to organise them and approach the parish council for support. The parish council does not have the resources to promote, run and organise all community events. As you say, there has been an overwhelming request by the residents attending the Village Hall Project Committee meetings for the voluntary groups to return to using the village hall, particularly the coffee mornings, and that has not happened, and the residents should be given an explanation why. Some suggest without a village hall the community spirit dies, maybe the community groups should consider the views of the local community that are crying out for them to return to the village hall. The village hall cannot be the hub of the village if no one is using it.

**Response to paragraph 6 (criticism lack of detailed renovation proposals)**

See Response to paragraph 2

**Response to paragraph 7 & 8 (suggestion of a less costly middle option, no question)**

The nature of the buildings current condition and decline and likely maintenance costs (even if improvements were not carried out) could be significant enough in the short-medium term to warrant this community consultation on cost alone. Keeping it as it is with no prospect of parking to promote increased use is not seen as an option the council wish to explore at this time. The parish council is

fully aware that this Village Hall decision for many people promotes nostalgia and other such feelings, however, the financial and other implications that taxpayers cannot ignore must be spelt out to them so they are able to make an informed choice. There is no viable middle option for the short to medium term or the parish council will just have to keep revisiting this topic, and we are well aware residents are already fed up with the time it's taken already.

I direct you to the website where you will see the most recent survey report (over 4 ½ years ago) suggesting works totalling £155K this does not include improvements. Even if only some of the most urgent repairs were spread out over a long period and paid for annually by taxpayers as we go would be sizeable annual increases, as every cost has to be divided by 210 taxpayers each year. The current running costs with no maintenance and no emergency costs are approx. £10 per taxpayer per year. If £20,000 needed spending in one year on emergency or essential repairs, this would be a sudden increase of approx. £100 to that year's tax bill, a significant increase.

To prevent further deterioration in the building, such as the black mould example, this might require a low level of heating in winter months, this alone could cost a further £10 per taxpayer, a doubling of present running costs. As you can see, the loan option, which can spread these kinds of costs over a period up to 50 years does help spread the taxpayer liabilities but if taken out are long-term obligations that once taken cannot be undone, hence the requirements for community support.

The parish council will not sugar coat the situation with the village hall as some want us to do. We have a duty to ensure any decisions we take are in the interest of our community and taxpayers and our legal obligations. This parish council is doing what no other parish council has done before regarding the Village Hall proposals, being realistic and transparent about the situation. You will find many parish councils might take this decision purely on cost grounds, particularly at this difficult time for parish council finances - we have chosen to give the community a say in defining the next period of the Village Halls existence and whether they wish it. It is not a listed building, it is not used sufficiently to justify the long-term repairs it needs, all local village halls are NOT paid for by taxpayers - YET - we have asked the community for their choice and parish council await that with interest.

#### **Response to paragraph 8 (weight of support - no question)**

The consultation paperwork clearly outlines why the community must engage with parish council on this matter if the Keep and Renovation option is to remain viable, irrespective of which definition of renovate is used.

A Parish council always takes financial decisions for its taxpayers and residents, we always could take a carte blanche approach if the parish council wished to but we have a fiduciary duty always.

#### **Response to paragraph 9 (Criticism of waste of money spent and inference on binding statement)**

Your inference that the purpose of this consultation is not genuine, simple to allow the parish council to tick a box is false. The statement about not binding on the council is a formality - as you know only the members of the parish council makes an actual decision based on many factors only one of which is the community response or desire to do something. It would have been inappropriate to imply whatever the community says will definitely happen; the parish council could never have guaranteed that.

The council will not be applying for any grant or loan in respect of the Village Hall without the community support which this consultation will either give or not.

The costs of the consultation are approx. £5 per household. Considering that should the renovation option be enacted, each of these households could face a total long-term financial liability 100-200 times or more that amount, it was felt that this was value for money. I'm sure you know that any

*council spending that kind of money has a fiduciary duty to ensure everyone is informed of that possibility.*

**Response to paragraph 10 (Criticism on lack of action)**

*I again further you to look at all the documents on the website under the Village Hall Project section. The parish council has worked tirelessly since the appraisal report was published a year ago. Further studies, including full costing and usage of local facilities and carrying out other necessary financial and regulatory work has been done in preparation for a final decision on the Village hall.*

*Please remember, no decisions have yet been made and all your comments and concerns, together with all other received have been noted by councillors.*

*Kind regards*

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## Residents 6&7 joint correspondence 16Apr24, verified

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**To Hooe Parish Council**

**Both {...} and {...} are of the opinion that the village hall should be **SAVED** for the use of the **HOOE** community for the present and the **GENERATIONS** that will follow us **ALL**.**

After moving to Hooe in 2014 it was very apparent that the village was a vibrant place to be part of with many activities and a community spirit. Very soon we wanted to partake within the community and felt very comfortable to offer support and become part of the village.

The Village hall was very much a hub of the community, along with the Church, the Red Lion and Hope Cottage.

We would like to bring to the attention to the PC the activities that were incumbent to the village hall during our tenure thus far: -

1. PC meetings
2. Elections
3. History Society
4. Youth Club
5. Open Group
6. Line Dancing
7. Martial Arts
8. Home Education Group
9. Table Tennis
10. Harvest Supper
11. Pancake Lunch
12. Bonfire Lunch
13. Coffee Mornings
14. Open Gardens toilet stop
15. Beetle Drives
16. Suppers/Charity Fundraising events
17. Village morning organised by the Parish Council, Various organisations attended: - Fire, police commissioner, Hastings conservation, footpaths, first aiders, music group, Hooe silver band, Neighbourhood watch among others
18. Handcraft/Art sessions
19. Bazaar/2017 Christmas fayre
20. Children's Parties/adults parties
21. Funeral Wakes
22. Hooe Motor Club
23. Hooe Band
24. Ukelele Group
25. Conquest Dr's meetings
26. Cycle stop for charity event.

There were a number of enquiries for the hire of the hall before the covid19 closure: -

1. Art Club
2. Toddlers
3. Pilates
4. Cinema

The ultimate issue if the village hall and grounds are sold is where are the community going to congregate for civil matters, elections, PC meetings, Church and village social occasions and community meetings of all kinds?



Hopefully this consultation will highlight the value and importance of the village hall and encourage councillors and community alike to increase the use through NEW societies and community events.

Regards,

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## **Residents 6&7 full response 17Apr24**

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*Thank you for your email. The council has received several during the consultation and is pleased it has promoted discussion amongst the community, of course councillors will take on board your comments.*

*It is our intention during the consultation to publish the answers to questions from residents that may be of key significance to the community consultation on the website during the consultation period, such as any clarification sought or potential misinterpretation of the documents.*

*The Parish Council will not publish the contents or the response if it contains your personal opinion or the potential to misinform, mislead or misdirect the outcome of the consultation such as criticism of legitimate council decision or policy.*

*Each response to you below is categorised and only those deemed seeking key clarification will be published. **Your list of 26+4 activities/enquiries has been deemed for wider publication, equally so, the response to your question as it provides valuable context and therefore is in the public interest and will be published during the consultation.***

*Please see document 5.13 Consultation - Responses to Questions answered at [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project)*

### **Response to paragraph 1 (list of activities - no question)**

*Your list of 26 past users of the Village Hall and possible 4 future users is uplifting to read. The council is aware how popular the village hall has been in the past but is also acutely aware of how little the building was used both prior to and since it re-opened in 2022. Nostalgia cannot alone be a reason for spending taxpayers money keeping a building going if times have changed and the long-term need no longer exists. Lack of use is why communities up and down the country have lost their pubs, local shops, post offices and banks – the mantra being “use it or lose it”.*

*Ninfield and Catsfield village halls are very busy and well used by the communities they serve. The council has already identified that none of our local village halls (also including Boreham Street, Crowhurst, Ashburnham and Herstmonceux) are paid for by taxpayers, all being independent financed charitable trusts- all their funding is donations or hiring fees. Hooe is the last remaining local parish funded facility.*

*The community must urgently take on board the wishes of those residents, such as yourselves, who have spoken out wondering why existing community groups do not get behind the council and be more pro-active in lobbying or indeed take a more hands-on role in identifying and running more community events in the Hall and approach the council with their ideas. The council is about to make a critical decision on the future and it might be a wasted opportunity if these groups or proposed users do not now make their intentions clear or their reasons why the hall is unsuitable. The council have full decision making over the hiring costs and in many cases when they have been approached by fund raising or charity events, they have waived any fees, rather having the hall used than empty.*

*The council urgently wishes to hear from any groups who may have specific requirements that would enable them to utilise the Village hall better. Indeed, the council has approached many of them and*

asked what it would take to return. After the consultation ends and the results are known, residents have a further opportunity to address the council at the Annual Parish Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> May before the Village Hall Committee meets in June.

Ultimately, it is now up to those in the community who challenge and lobby the parish council to keep the facility to start to demonstrate how they will help achieve and maintain increased use in the long-term, not just turn up and say so at meetings. The parish council notes all the talk but is disappointed by the action.

**Response to paragraph 2 (Where to go? question)**

The answer regarding where the community will meet if the village hall and grounds are sold is two-fold. The official meetings of the council or polling station may not justify a building alone. Whilst the hall was closed for 6 months, these meetings were held at the Church or in a hireable room in Ninfield, just 1-2 miles away for residents. As for the social calendar of the village, it is clear the Church is a central place for the community and well utilised and even has parking, The council has already stated a desire to support it more financially, but unfortunately there are some legal barriers at present. The other local facilities at Ninfield are available less than 2 miles away and, as you point out, we have a thriving community pub, The Red Lion and nearby tea-shop/café Hope Cottage very close to the village. All these and the other local businesses, not just the village hall, goes to make a thriving community.

Please remember, no decisions have yet been made and all your comments and concerns, together with all other received have been noted by councillors.

Kind regards

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## Residents 8&9 joint correspondence 16Apr24, verified

Dear Parish Councillors,

I wish to draw your attention to a number of omissions or inconsistencies on the consultation documents that have recently been delivered to this household. The sheet on which to record householders' votes did not include a section for comments to be written so I feel it necessary to pass on my observations to you all.

There were only two options available on the voting paper – to close and sell or to keep and maintain at high cost. In my opinion there should have been a third option – to maintain the hall in reasonable condition for use, without excessive expenditure. I question whether this has even been considered by those who appear to want to close the building.

In my opinion the letter that accompanies the voting paper sets out a prejudiced explanation of the potential cost of maintaining the village hall. The sums mentioned were arbitrary, with no independent verification as to their accuracy or indeed whether or not they were compulsory requirements. In setting out the random costs of the village hall there was no explanation as to why significant sums of money (at least £12,000) have been allocated to high-cost professionals, as detailed in my previous e-mail, which has been of little or no value to the village and created a financial shortfall in the accounts. Also, there was no consideration of the potential benefits the hall brings to the community – for meetings, functions, exhibitions, games, exercise, a book exchange, heritage centre as well as its regular use as an electoral polling station and parish council base for meetings. To my mind this was a shoddy portrayal of the situation with regard to the village hall, written with the primary intention to promote the vote to close the building. I question whether a consultation vote based on inaccurate or vague information may be considered a valid debate and also whether councillors approved the content of the accompanying document before it was released.

My understanding is that this “consultation” was to be conducted by a (neutral) third party but I note that the return envelope was addressed to the Clerk to the Parish Council at her home address. I question, therefore, what safeguards are in place to ensure this process is completed fairly and impartially. This is not made clear on the accompanying document.

Quite honestly, I see the proposal to close the village hall as an act of vandalism, by people who do not have the common sense to envisage the long-term damage to the village that would surely result from this misguided, hasty proposal which has clearly not been adequately discussed with the community at large. Please remember that as Parish Councillors you are here to serve this community, not to dictate. This can only be achieved by engaging with the community through dialogue, which I feel has so far been suppressed.

It gives me no pleasure to write to you in this way but I feel it is necessary given the passive conduct that I have seen from some Parish Councillors. As one who has lived here most of my life I have strong feelings for this village, its amenities and those who reside here and I feel it is not too harsh to suggest that the very fabric of life in this village may be damaged beyond repair if the village hall is closed.

This is not a criticism of all parish councillors as I believe there are those sitting around the council table who may share my concerns. It is said that all it takes for evil to prevail is that good men (and women) do nothing. All I can do is cast my vote and bring my concerns to your attention; it is for those among you with the will to do so, to stop this destruction of our village and its amenities whilst that decision remains in your hands. I urge you to reject the siren voices who would destroy your village hall because, long after those voices have walked away, those who follow in your footsteps will have to live with the consequences of the actions you take at this period in time.

Sent on behalf of,

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**Residents 8&9 full response 22Apr24**

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*Thank you for your email which has been noted by all councillors. We have responded to your questions and any statements or inferences you have made that are false, in particular, direct your attention to our response to paragraph 5 with some urgency.*

*It is our intention during the consultation to publish the answers to questions from residents that may be of key significance to the community consultation on the website during the consultation period, such as any clarification sought or potential misinterpretation of the documents.*

*The Parish Council will not publish the contents or the response if it contains your personal opinion or the potential to misinform, mislead or misdirect the outcome of the consultation such as criticism of legitimate council decision or policy.*

*Each response to you below is categorised and only those deemed seeking key clarification will be published. **No responses to you have been deemed for wider publication.***

*Please see document 5.13 Consultation - Responses to Questions answered at [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project).*

**Response to paragraph 1 (Criticism of council decision/policy, no question)**

*The council decided against general comments on the consultation form since any member of the community, at any time, can forward their comments to the council, as indeed you have just done. We have received many already and each one will help inform councillors in their decisions. Councillors have seen the detailed results of a previous "comment" based consultation carried out and were concerned that the parish council had to infer and make a subjective decision on many comments - some weren't classifiable as for or against – the parish council wanted to avoid this and just receive a single clear preference.*

**Response to paragraphs 2&3 (suggestion of a less costly middle option, arbitrary costs, no question)**

*The nature of the buildings current condition and decline and likely maintenance costs (even if improvements were not carried out) could be significant enough in the short-medium term to warrant this community consultation on cost alone. Keeping it as it is with no prospect of parking to promote increased use is not seen as an option the council wish to explore at this time. The parish council is fully aware that this Village Hall decision for many people promotes nostalgia and other such feelings, however, the financial and other implications that taxpayers cannot ignore must be spelt out to them so they are able to make an informed choice. There is no viable middle option for the short to medium term or the parish council will just have to keep revisiting this topic, and we are well aware residents are already fed up with the time it's taken already.*

*I direct you to the website where you will see the most recent survey report (over 4 ½ years ago) "4.02 Sheppard Survey Report" suggesting works totalling £155K this does not include improvements. Even if only some of the most urgent repairs were spread out over a long period and paid for annually by taxpayers as we go would be sizeable annual increases, as every cost has to be divided by 210 taxpayers each year. The current running costs with no maintenance and no emergency costs are approx. £10 per taxpayer per year. If £20,000 needed spending in one year on*

emergency or essential repairs, this would be a sudden increase of approx. £100 to that year's tax bill, a significant increase.

To prevent further deterioration in the building, such as the black mould example, this might require a low level of heating in winter months, this alone could cost a further £10 per taxpayer, a doubling of present running costs. As you can see, the loan option, which can spread these kinds of costs over a period up to 50 years does help spread the taxpayer liabilities but if taken out are long-term obligations that once taken cannot be undone, hence the requirements for community support. The verification of the example £100,000 loan stated in the documents is available on the website as document" 4.08a PWLB Fixed Rate Loan 100000 25yrs Est Costs WL 13Mar2024"

**Response to paragraph 4 (Criticism of unexplained costs and bias in consultation, no question)**

At the last meeting, which marked the end of the recent financial year, council issued a statement to explain the costs you refer to. Please see that at [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/council-notices/](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/council-notices/) document "7 Statement Financial Spend on Professional Services 08.04.2024"

I refer you also to the document 06 on [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-projects-committee/](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-projects-committee/) which are the minutes of the 11th March Village Hall Project Committee where you will find confirmation that all councillors debated at length and approved unanimously the content of the consultation documents in detail, all councillors having the opportunity to add or change content.

The parish council will not sugar coat the situation with the village hall as some want us to do. We have a duty to ensure any decisions we take are in the interest of our community and taxpayers and our legal obligations. This parish council is doing what no other parish council has done before regarding the Village Hall proposals, being realistic and transparent about the situation. You will find many parish councils might take this decision purely on cost grounds, particularly at this difficult time for parish council finances - we have chosen to give the community a say in defining the next period of the Village Halls existence and whether they wish it. It is not a listed building, it is not used sufficiently to justify the long-term repairs it needs, all local village halls are NOT paid for by taxpayers - YET - we have asked the community for their choice and parish council await that with interest.

**Response to paragraph 5 (Potential libellous at an individual/Criticism of consultation procedure, no question)**

Whilst a response to this paragraph was being finalised and before you'd had received that response, on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April the full content of your email was posted on social media via Facebook group "Hooe (nr Battle, East Sussex) Community Group" under the name "xxx". Although this is a private group, it is freely available to join and had 256 members at that time and the post had been liked by 8 members.

Councillors asked the Chairman of the council to urgently contact the administrators of the group raising their concerns of the potentially libellous comments made regarding the trustworthiness of the Clerk to the Parish Council (in the context of using their home address to receive the responses to the consultation) were now also in the public domain. The Facebook administrators agreed with the council's argument and that it did not comply with the site's content standards and the post was taken down sometime on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> by the admin.

Councillors were clear that these comments were totally unacceptable even before you made this public, but as you now have, councillors have asked me to convene a meeting for them to assess your comments and action to make public against the council's Vexatious Policy (August 2023) which you will find attached.

*Councillors wish to make it very clear that all unsubstantiated claims or statements directed at individual councillors or their staff will be robustly challenged. The council is a corporate body and all decisions are ratified by that body – no one person makes decisions so should not be challenged, intimidated or abused at a personal level. Councillors suggest if you have any evidence or further clarification to support your comments, you urgently provide the Chairman with such information. Alternatively, if you feel your comments were badly composed, open to the wrong interpretation, written in haste or anger and wish to retract and apologise, councillors request you do this urgently, to avoid unnecessary council time and further expense.*

*The security aspects to protect the integrity of the consultation both from voter abuse or administrative issues were a confidential part of the Clerk's report and not discussed in public by councillors at the 11<sup>th</sup> March meeting to ensure no-one could use that information to gain any advantage. You may ask the council for more specific answers to any remaining concerns after the voting has been concluded and announced at 8<sup>th</sup> May meeting.*

*The outbound mailing was overseen by a third party and they have confirmed 206 letters were issued to all addresses in the 29 postcodes in the parish. As for the address on the return label, this is the official business address of the council and all envelopes returned remain sealed until opening at the next meeting to collate and announce the results. The Royal Mail response license ensures mail is returned to the official address only.*

**Response to paragraph 6,7,8 (Personal opinion, criticism of councillors, no question)**

*The building is well over 110 years old and has no significant TLC for many years, the council has a legal obligation to manage council assets appropriately. The council does not wish to get into a position where the building must close and further significant maintenance carried out if the community do not want to pay for it or use it anymore.*

*The parish council has most of the financial, technical and legal points answered about how they could proceed, what they don't have is a fuller picture of the communities wish regarding the future of the hall. Although meetings seem well attended and views are expressed, they are not the only views. There is never more than 10% of the electorate at meetings and many do not offer their views. To limit our decision making to only the views we hear at meetings, or those who shout loudest via email, would be democratically unacceptable to most people. A previous attempt at a consultation received only 39 subjective comments. The parish council has a duty to establish the actual views of the wider community, particularly those who up to now may be unaware of the situation and uninformed on key matters such as financial implications for them.*

*Your inference that the council has already decided to close and sell the hall is false. As you know, a decision has not been made until the council make it - I can confirm no motion has been passed to close and sell the Hall or otherwise. I can confirm, all meetings are held in public and on the record, no private meetings or groups of individual councillors get together to make decisions, as that would be illegal. It is up to each individual councillor to vote on this, it is for each of them to decide given the breadth of information they have now amassed on this project, and ultimately with the result of this consultation. All information is available on the website to everyone, nothing is kept back from voters.*

*Ninfield and Catsfield village halls are very busy and well used by the communities they serve. The council has already identified that none of our local village halls (also including Boreham Street, Crowhurst, Ashburnham and Herstmonceux) are paid for by taxpayers, all being independent financed charitable trusts- all their funding is donations or hiring fees. Hooe is the last remaining local parish funded facility.*

*The community must urgently take on board the wishes of those residents, such as yourselves, who have spoken out wondering why existing community groups do not get behind the council and be more pro-active in lobbying or indeed take a more hands-on role in identifying and running more community events in the Hall and approach the council with their ideas. The council is about to make a critical decision on the future and it might be a wasted opportunity if these groups or proposed users do not now make their intentions clear or their reasons why the hall is unsuitable. The council have full decision making over the hiring costs and in many cases when they have been approached by fund raising or charity events, they have waived any fees, rather having the hall used than empty.*

*The council urgently wishes to hear from any groups who may have specific requirements that would enable them to utilise the Village hall better. Indeed, the council has approached many of them and asked what it would take to return. After the consultation ends and the results are known, residents have a further opportunity to address the council at the Annual Parish Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> May before the Village Hall Committee meets in June.*

*Ultimately, it is now up to those in the community, like yourselves, who challenge and lobby the parish council to keep the facility to start to demonstrate how they will help achieve and maintain increased use in the long-term, not just turn up and say so at meetings. The parish council notes all the talk but is disappointed by the action. The future of the village hall has blighted this village for many years and this council wish to bring it to a conclusion. The council cannot be accused of rushing this matter.*

*Please remember, no decisions have yet been made and all your comments and concerns, together with all other received have been noted by councillors.*

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## **Residents 10&11 joint correspondence 26Apr24, verified**

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To the members of Hooe Parish Council

As long-term residents of Hooe we are appalled at the decline of this village. We have lived here over 50% of our adult lives and have witnessed a village with a heart and social network to totally diminish.

In the last few years there has been much wrangling over a proposed village hall, with seemingly some support for a new hall sited on the recreation ground, a hall that would seat in excess of 100 and provide facilities for large gatherings, possibly weddings.

This new consultation is TELLING us that not only does the village not require a new hall, that it does not require the existing one!

It is not so far back that in the present hall we attended coffee mornings, jumble sales, afternoon teas, Harvest Suppers, Pilates and Yoga classes, heard the silver band practice, and attended a memorable Beetle Drive! All of these events could be re-generated with time and a genuine concern for the village and its inhabitants.

It would appear that some members of the present council have no desire to facilitate the success of Hooe Village:

Assuming the need for a Community Consultation, we do not understand that why in a village with so few houses it was necessary to spend money on posting out questionnaires, which could easily have been hand delivered by council members, and funding posters which could have been made up on A3 sheets and put on the council notice boards.

The Consultation gives only YES or NO options with respect to the Hall.

The Hall, which after a period of closure to carry out essential health and safety works, following a very successful Ukrainian afternoon tea, was re-opened and since that time has been boycotted by some members of the village and indeed former parish councillors.

It would appear that neither then or now that a business plan has been undertaken to understand the cost of maintaining and running the hall and the income required to do this.

We are convinced that if the decision is made to keep the existing hall that there are many villagers who could be prevailed upon to use their professional skills to carry out necessary maintenance works probably at reduced rates., including sponsorship.

Our last comment does however require the parishioners to be happy with our representatives on the council. It should be noted that as councillors that you are there to represent our views and should be directing these views to the Clerk. If f you do not feel that you can be objective - you should resign your position allowing others who have an interest in the life and soul of the village to stand in your place.

Has the present council investigated the origins of the hall. Are there any clauses that may prevent the selling and development of the land?



Given the amount of time and parishioner's money spent on investigating the building of a new hall, we are totally disgusted at the lack of time and interest spent on deciding future of the hall that formed the heart of this village for so many years.

We feel obliged to return the voting forms, confirming that I wish to keep the existing hall, but until such time as we are informed the genuine cost of itemised repair works required and its annual upkeep, it seems entirely irresponsible to expect parishioners to make an informed decision.

Yours sincerely,

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## **Residents 10&11 full response 7 May24**

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*Thank you for your email. The council has received several during the consultation and is pleased it has promoted discussion amongst the community, of course councillors will take on board your comments.*

*It was our intention during the consultation to publish the answers to questions from residents that may be of key significance to the community consultation on the website during the consultation period, such as any clarification sought or potential misinterpretation of the documents.*

*The Parish Council will not publish the contents or the response if it contains your personal opinion or the potential to misinform, mislead or misdirect the outcome of the consultation such as criticism of legitimate council decision or policy.*

*Although your correspondence came in before the closing date of the consultation, the reply is able to be issued and published fully now the consultation is closed. Please see document 5.14 Consultation - All Correspondence and Full responses at [www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project](http://www.hooe-pc.gov.uk/village-hall-project)*

### **Response to 1,4,5,8,10 (Decline of community, past events, boycotts, volunteering).**

*The activities you refer to can all come back if the community wishes to organise them and approach the council for support. The council does not have the resources to promote, run and organise all community events. There has been an overwhelming request by the residents attending the Village Hall Project Committee meetings for the voluntary groups to return to using the village hall, particularly the coffee mornings, and that has not happened, and the residents should be given an explanation why. You suggest without a village hall the heart and social network dies, maybe the community groups should consider the views of the local community that are crying out for them to return to the village hall. The village hall cannot be the hub of the village if no one is using it.*

*Community groups have been contacted for comment on what it would take to return to the village hall - the arguments are those you'd expect - parking and kitchen facilities are the main two, hence the planned improvements. If community groups and other users find alternative facilities locally, that is to be welcomed too. All local venues have desperate funding issues for their premises and facilities - but Hooe Village hall is the only one within a 6-mile radius that is paid for by local taxpayers. They have to be considered too.*

### **Response to paragraph 2 (Support for new village hall)**

*May I refer you to the minutes of the Village Hall Project Committee at [www.Hooe-PC.gov.uk/village-hall-project/](http://www.Hooe-PC.gov.uk/village-hall-project/) Document "5.02 Village Hall Project Committee minutes 12.02.24" where you will find the discussion and motion passed unanimously by the council to reject the building of a new village hall on the recreation ground. I refer you to the document 4.0 pages 4-7 and associated sections in Appendix 1 and 2 regarding new build usage and detailing the requirements council would have to comply with*

*in order to satisfy planning authorities and financial providers that there was a demonstrated local need in the community and not for the provision of facilities for mostly outside users run like a business, such as for wedding receptions as you state. The only identified requirements by the community communicated to the council to that date in support of a larger building was a once-a-year Harvest Festival for 100+ and a local business wishing to have room for circa 70 Pilates/Yoga mats – not necessarily focused on localised community activities.*

**Response to paragraph 3 (Suggested leading consultation)**

*The consultation does not tell the community that it does not require any hall – it states the community need to decide for themselves given the facts if they wish to retain and pay more towards it.*

*The nature of the buildings current condition and decline and likely maintenance costs (even if improvements were not carried out) could be significant enough in the short-medium term to warrant this community consultation on cost alone. Keeping it as it is with no prospect of parking to promote increased use is not seen as an option the council wish to explore at this time. The parish council is fully aware that this Village Hall decision for many people promotes nostalgia and other such feelings, however, the financial and other implications that taxpayers cannot ignore must be spelt out to them so they are able to make an informed choice. There is no viable middle option for the short to medium term or the parish council will just have to keep revisiting this topic, and we are well aware residents are already fed up with the time it's taken already.*

*I direct you to the website where you will see the most recent survey report (over 4 ½ years ago) suggesting works totalling £155K this does not include improvements. Even if only some of the most urgent repairs were spread out over a long period and paid for annually by taxpayers as we go would be sizeable annual increases, as every cost has to be divided by 210 taxpayers each year. The current running costs with no maintenance and no emergency costs are approx. £10 per taxpayer per year. If £20,000 needed spending in one year on emergency or essential repairs, this would be a sudden increase of approx. £100 to that year's tax bill, a significant increase.*

*To prevent further deterioration in the building, such as the black mould example, this might require a low level of heating in winter months, this alone could cost a further £10 per taxpayer, a doubling of present running costs. As you can see, the loan option, which can spread these kinds of costs over a period up to 50 years does help spread the taxpayer liabilities but if taken out are long-term obligations that once taken cannot be undone, hence the requirements for community support.*

*The parish council will not sugar coat the situation with the village hall as some want us to do. We have a duty to ensure any decisions we take are in the interest of our community and taxpayers and our legal obligations. This parish council is doing what no other parish council has done before regarding the Village Hall proposals, being realistic and transparent about the situation. You will find many parish councils might take this decision purely on cost grounds, particularly at this difficult time for parish council finances - we have chosen to give the community a say in defining the next period of the Village Halls existence and whether they wish it. It is not a listed building, it is not used sufficiently to justify the long-term repairs it needs, all local village halls are NOT paid for by taxpayers - YET - we have asked the community for their choice and parish council await that with interest.*

**Response to paragraph 6,7,9,13,14 (Criticism of cost of consultation, lack of options, business plan, itemised repairs, lack of interest)**

*At the February meeting of the Village Hall Project Committee, councillors voted unanimously to consult the community, pay for promotion of it to ensure a wide participation and gave their reasoning - which you can establish from the minutes available on the website. I'm sure you are aware no former council ever asked the community in this way and provided the necessary depth of financial implications and usage analysis available in report 4.0 and Appendix 1 and 2 – this is where you will see the business plan investigations for all three options on the table prior to that decision. This single*

*document took over 60 hours to compile, the council has worked long and hard over the last year to finally bring reality, focus, transparency and integrity to this project.*

*Community support is a key element to any application for a grant or public works loan - without the result of this consultation the council would be unable to comply with these conditions and therefore may not be able to decide to Keep and Renovate without substantial community input. I'm sure you appreciate any council which decides to spend a significant amount of taxpayers' money should at least know they have a mandate to do it. The decision and procedure of mailing documents and widespread advertising was approved by councillors to ensure security, integrity and wide participation, ensuring every household in the village did not miss the opportunity.*

*At this stage the parish council is seeking a simple direction from the community. If we were to try to present in advance a complex variety of possibilities of what we might do and obtain the detailed costs of all these options, it was felt this would over complicate what in essence is a simple decision - does the community want the council to keep the hall (with a few sensible suggestions for improvements) at not an insignificant cost or does the community feel that money is better in their pockets over the long-term.*

*The council decided against general comments on the consultation form since any member of the community, at any time, can forward their comments to the council, as indeed you have just done. We have received many already and each one will help inform councillors in their decisions. Councillors have seen the detailed results of a previous "comment" based consultation carried out and were concerned that the parish council had to infer and make a subjective decision on many comments - some weren't classifiable as for or against – the parish council wanted to avoid this and just receive a single clear preference.*

*The costs of the consultation are approx. £5 per household. Considering that should the renovation option be enacted, each of these households could face a total long-term financial liability 100-200 times or more that amount, it was felt that this was value for money. I'm sure you know that any council spending that kind of money has a fiduciary duty to ensure everyone is informed of that possibility.*

*The building is well over 110 years old and has no significant TLC for many years, the council has a legal obligation to manage council assets appropriately. The council does not wish to get into a position where the building must close and further significant maintenance carried out if the community do not want to pay for it or use it anymore.*

*The parish council has most of the financial, technical and legal points answered about how they could proceed, what they don't have is a fuller picture of the communities wish regarding the future of the hall. Although meetings seem well attended and views are expressed, they are not the only views. There is never more than 10% of the electorate at meetings and many do not offer their views. To limit our decision making to only the views we hear at meetings, or those who shout loudest via email, would be democratically unacceptable to most people. A previous attempt at a consultation received only 39 subjective comments. The parish council has a duty to establish the actual views of the wider community, particularly those who up to now may be unaware of the situation and uninformed on key matters such as financial implications for them.*

#### **Response to paragraph 12 (Prevent selling and development)**

*Until council know what the community wants, it would have been an unnecessary use of time and money to investigate all the implications of selling and development, in the same way, council did not offer varying choices of different renovation and improvement options. If the community do not want the hall saved and the council agrees, those investigations will begin and council will see where they lead and keep everyone informed.*

Response to paragraph 11 (Council members)

The representatives on the council are a matter for the voters to decide at election time, however, there have been 2 vacancies on the council advertised in the last 3 months that have each attracted only one applicant, so there have been opportunities for people to get involved should they wish.

Please remember, no decisions have yet been made and all your comments and concerns, together with all others received have been noted by councillors.

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Residents 12 correspondence 9May24, verified

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Thank you for sending through the results of the survey.

This now raises some issues obviously as the majority have voted in favour of keeping the Village Hall. So, I have put down some thoughts that hopefully might help the Council, just my thoughts I am not claiming to be an expert, but sometimes the benefit of not directly involved enables a different and unemotional view. If the Hall is to survive moving forward and the Council do decide to follow the results of the consultation, then they have some big challenges ahead.

1. The Village Hall needs be able to “stand on its own two feet” it has to generate enough income to pay for itself. It has to move forward on a more business-like basis and needs someone on the Council or reporting to the Council with specific responsibility for driving that.
2. There needs to be a budget for the Village Hall – in order to establish what level on income is needed to sustain it each year without just reverting to maximising the precept every year.
3. The community has to come together, we can’t have splinter groups – those that have been most vocal about keeping the Hall haven’t been using the Village Hall – that can’t continue and so the Council need to find a way to resolve that – I am not suggesting it was or is the Council’s fault – but the reality is that the responsibility lies with them – although those parishioners who have been very vocal need to step up and all differences need to be put aside.
4. There needs to be some thought on how to attract bookings to the Hall – I often hear “Where are the youngsters” – the reality is that they are at home in their bedrooms on their devices, kids are not excited by a “Coffee morning” at the Village Hall, it isn’t cool and even if they were to be dragged along, they would most likely spend the whole time glued to their phones. The Village Hall needs to almost be “re-branded” to have any chance of appealing to a younger audience.
5. There does need to be some investment in the Hall over and above the statutory requirements – decent seating, kitchen facelift, less plain and dull décor, modern toilets – it needs to be a welcoming modern space. At the moment it is a tired, dull building with uncomfortable chairs, dated crockery and kitchen appliances. It absolutely fits the traditional “Village Hall” from the last century – that is not appealing to today’s younger generation and potential users from the local area.
6. A large % of the Community voted to keep it – they also need to now stand up and be counted – they wanted it, they need to use it, we can’t have an expensive white elephant just because it makes us feel all warm and cosy about having a community, a building rarely makes a community, people make a community, the Council have to try and find a way to get more people engaged in using the Village Hall and part of doing that is to now invest a bit to make it more appealing, especially as they are competing with newer, more modern facilities in the surrounding villages.
7. The small garden area also could do with a facelift – maybe a patio area, some decent outside seating, a bit of planting – low maintenance but make it a usable welcoming area ?

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Residents 12 full response 5Jun24

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Thank you for your email dated 9<sup>th</sup> May regarding your views on the Village Hall consultation result; resident's views are always considered and appreciated. Apologies for the delay in replying to you.

It would not be inappropriate at this stage to give a full reply to each of your points since the council themselves have not met to discuss the implications of the result and decide any further actions. The Chairman (of the VHPC) has asked me to assure you that he has noted your 7 points and will ensure each of them is included in discussion points raised at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June. If you are unable to

attend the meeting please let me know and I will ensure you receive a further detailed responses after councillors have discussed it further.

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End of document – last updated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024

# Community Consultation – Future of HOOE VILLAGE HALL

## 5.17 Sheppard Survey Further Analysis

This document provides recent context to the 4.2 Sheppard Survey report from 17 Sep 2019. See document 5.17a, a reproduction of the original 4.2 Sheppard Survey report colour coded using the following criteria by Cllr Leonard on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

### Purpose of Colour Coding

The survey report gives 62 detailed points in relation to the surveyor's opinion in September 2019, that was nearly 5 years ago. Some of those issues may have been resolved, or worsened in the intervening time. I have carried out a personal judgement using RED, AMBER, GREEN and GREY to categorise the points as follows:

**RED:** The work was identified as a **priority, urgent or critical** at the time and since then **likely to have deteriorated further** since little or no remedial work has been carried out since. This work likely needs to be a **priority part of an initial** phase of repairs.

**AMBER:** The work was identified as **necessary** at the time and since then **some further deterioration may have occurred** since little or no remedial work has been carried out since. This work likely needs **considering as part of an initial** phase of repairs.

**GREEN:** The work was identified as **advisory** at the time and since then little deterioration seems to have occurred and little or no remedial work has been carried out since. This work likely needs **considering a secondary phase** of repairs if reqd.

**GREY:** Recommendations made for **further** studies made at the time which have not been actioned and will need **discussion as to whether or not** it should form part of the renovation project.

Un-coloured points have either been carried out or are just statements.

### Costings by Colour Coding

The survey report gives a breakdown of likely costs totalling £155K (excl VAT) of the works detailed in the 62 points. Using the Red/Amber/Green judgements above, the costings are categorised as:

<b>RED:</b>	£ 68,000
<b>AMBER:</b>	£ 27,500
<b>GREEN:</b>	£ 53,500
<b>GREY:</b>	£ no estimates for this work
<b>Done:</b>	£ 6,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£155,000</b>

# Community Consultation – Future of HOOE VILLAGE HALL

## GREY Coding

The survey report gives recommendations of further work that should be carried out to get a complete picture of the building.

These are summarised as:

- Letter: Limited survey carried out, expect more involved and costly work
- 13 & 22: Claim against extension buildings insurer for movement and related cracks/roof
- 28 & 33: Specialist timber contractor to check for wet/dry rot and infestation
- 52: Highways to repair pavement
- 53: No level access into and around building
- 54: Asbestos survey
- 55: Check water supply for leakage
- 61: CCTV survey of foul and storm drainage

No estimate of these additional works was included. It is also key to point out that since the estimates that were provided we have gone through a period of high inflation particularly in the construction materials and labour costs so these costs are likely to be too low.

## Up-To-Date Photos

Photos below taken on 22 Apr 24 to illustrate current conditions outside building. Most people see front entrance and inside which gives false impression of state of building.

No photos were taken at the height of the black mould inside the hall all around up to a height of 6 feet in places during January/February – however we know the cause of this and the history and can decide if necessary to improve ventilation and heating in winter. The mould does clean off and stays away during warmer months. General condition of internal walls regarding damp or rising damp is not actually known but there is strong evidence of internal leaks resulting from crack roof covering between main hall and rear-extension, water is damaging ceiling and inside cupboard in rear extension.

## Recommendations

**Councillors consider whether this survey, nearly 5 years old is acceptable or should be updated and possibly enhanced to cover the additional aspects above OR accept and use the detailed recommendations in this survey report to identify likely works and costs needed for the project.**

**Recommend councillors consider immediate but temporary repair to resolve ingress of water ASAP.**

## Up to date photos - Windows





Up to date photos – Windows/Doors



Up to date photos – Roof/Soffits/Facias



**Up to date photos – Render**



**Up to date photos – Render**



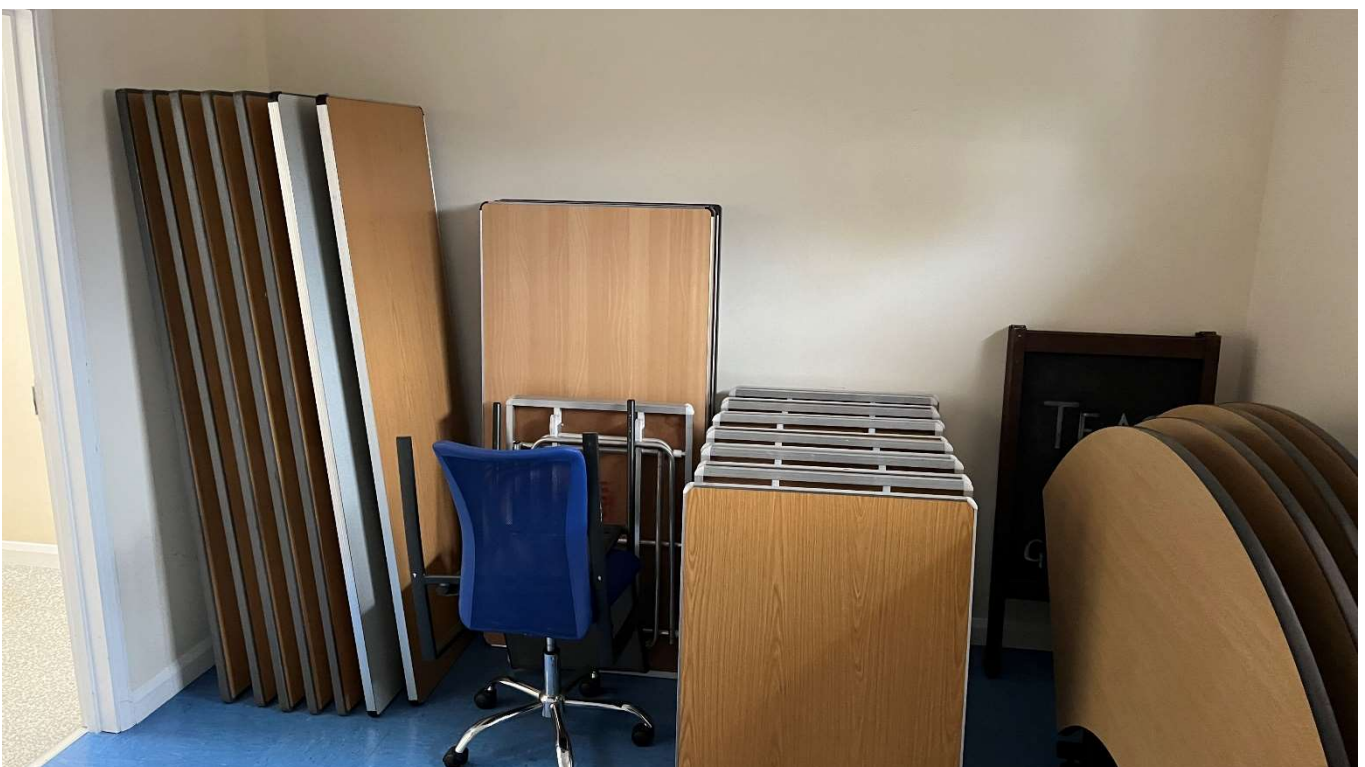
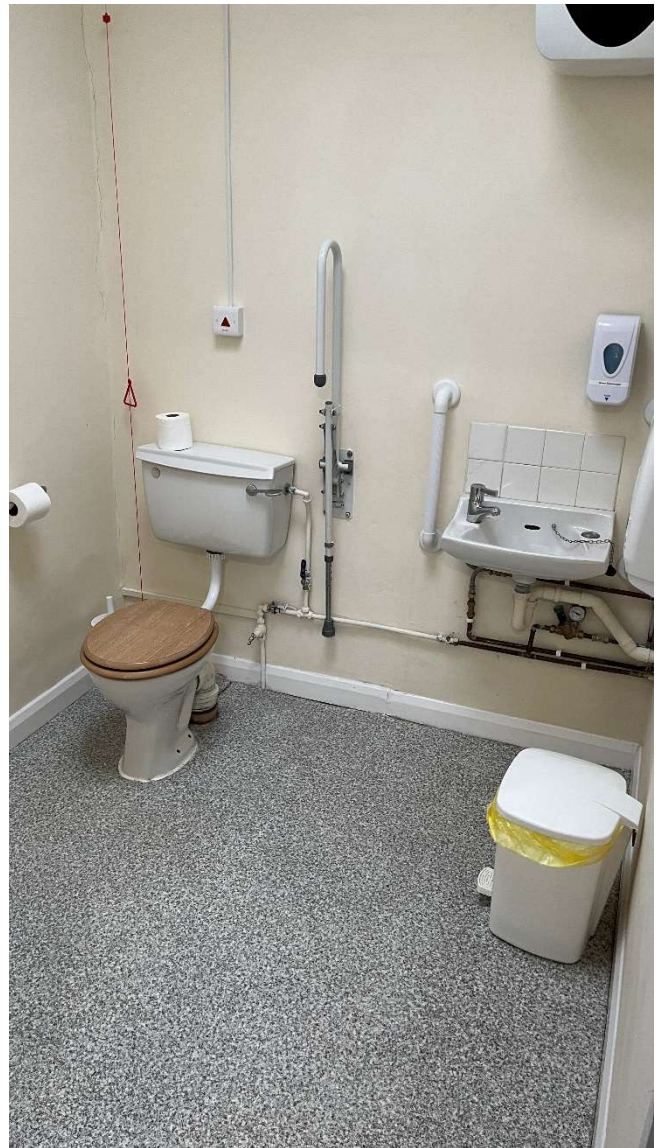
**Up to date photos – Airbricks/Damp**



**Up to date photos – Inside Mould**



## Up to date photos – Inside

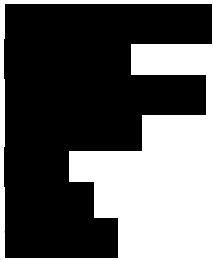


Your ref:

Our ref: E8582/RJS

31 October 2019

Hooe Parish Council



Dear Sirs

**Village Hall, Denbigh Road, Hooe, Battle, East Sussex**

Thank you for your instruction to complete a limited structural inspection of the above and to report our findings.

Our inspection was completed on 17 September 2019. No opening up or specialist investigation was completed. We were able to inspect the attic space only from one of the loft hatches. Inspection of external flat roofs was by ladder only.

References to location are made in relation to either compass north or as facing the front elevation. For the purpose of this report the front elevation faces west.

We are not aware the building is either listed or within a conservation area.

The original single storey detached building comprises of masonry (assumed solid) elevations with a pitched roof over. External elevations are in painted render.

A single storey extension exists at the rear across the width of the building again in masonry elevations but with a flat roof over. It appears to differently aged additions exist to the front right creating the kitchen and entrance hall again in masonry elevations with a pitched and flat roof over respectively.

Archive records from the Sussex Agricultural Express suggest the hall was built by November 1912 as a reading room for the village of Hooe constructed by Mr Horace Taylor at a cost of £300.00.



An historic drawing found on the internet suggests the building was originally only three approximate 9' long x 19' 6" wide bays with a small externally accessed outhouse attached to the rear left now being four bays in length plus the flat roof rear addition.

The current condition of the building suggests that limited maintenance, repair and redecoration has been completed especially in recent times. You should therefore expect necessary maintenance, repair and redecoration to be more involved & costly.

Subject to the following we consider the overall structural integrity & adequacy of the building to be good:

#### Roof Coverings & Roof Structure:

- 1) As viewed from ground level and from ladder access at eaves level the main roof covering to the pitches is in clay tiles with locally missing, broken &/or slipped tiles requiring replacement &/or shuffling. There is some minor undulation to the main roof pitches which is to be expected of a building of such age/arrangement/construction. Local disturbance exists to roof tiles such as the rear right corner where tiles are at risk of falling.
- 2) Gaps can be seen between ridge tiles which suggests bedding/fixity is not adequate. No mechanical fixity of ridge/hip tiles exist which is not surprising given the age of the roof covering. No waterproof membrane exists below roof tiles with timber battens/mortar torching evident. Mortar torching to the underside of the roof covering is locally missing having fallen off. Given the visible condition of the tile roof covering and lack of waterproof membrane below we consider the roof covering should be carefully stripped and reinstated (incorporating new/reclaimed tiles to match existing for any shortfall following stripping), new treated timber battens, new galvanised fixings, new breathable waterproof membrane and new leadwork all to Lead Sheet Association minimum standards.
- 3) At the time of replacement thermal insulation should be provided/upgraded and you should expect to find local roof timber/woodwork that requires replacement the extent of which remains unknown until the roof covering is stripped.
- 4) Original roof timber/woodwork should be treated for protection against rot/infestation at the time the roof covering is replaced. New roof timber/woodwork should be pressure impregnated for rot/infestation protection.
- 5) Local moss growth exists to roof pitches especially where north facing which should be periodically cleared and the tile joints lightly bleached. Valleys, flat roof/pitch junctions, gutters, hoppers and downpipes should be periodically cleared of debris. This will not be required initially if the roof covering is stripped and reinstated.
- 6) Other than minor cracking to ceilings & skelings and minor undulation to external roof pitches there is no visible evidence either internally or externally to suggest the roof structure which is in timber/metal tie rod trusses at centres through building length and purlins/common rafters is currently either defective or inadequate. Some local minor cracking exists in painted ceiling/skeling finishes which requires only proper repair during normal redecoration.
- 7) Thermal upgrade/improvement is needed to the attic floor and skelings (sloping ceilings) while maintaining attic cross ventilation.
- 8) Felt covered flat roofs exist at the rear and front right over the single storey extensions. The rear roof has been painted with a temporary repair waterproof paint system which suggests a previous water ingress problem. Typically such flat roofs have a life span of only 10-15N<sup>o</sup> years and it is recommended the flat roof coverings are replaced at the time the main roof covering is stripped/replaced. Thermal upgrade will be needed to the flat roofs at the time of covering replacement.
- 9) A water test is needed to confirm all roof water is collected & routed away adequately. Gutters and downpipes are in poor corroded condition with stop ends locally missing and local joints leaking requiring replacement. Periodic clearing will be needed of all gutters, hoppers, downpipes, outlets, etc going forward.

- 10) Flash band temporary repair exists between the flat roof at the rear and the main rear elevation suggesting a water ingress problem.
- 11) Rooflights exist to the cloakrooms which are aged with seals deteriorating requiring replacement in new.

#### **Foundations, Sub-Structure & Superstructure:**

- 12) There is visible evidence of historic movement to the building as evidence by the leaning left and right flank elevations with it appears a post construction tie rod installed across through the centre of the building. There is no visible evidence of recent/ongoing outward movement in the side elevations.
- 13) There is sizeable (8-9mm to left flank and 3-4mm to right flank) previously repaired vertical cracking/gapping between the main rear elevation and the rear single storey addition which is indicative of ground movement. Cracking exists internally and externally. A claim for subsidence should be made upon the buildings insurer allowing site investigations to be completed, mitigation works actioned and repair/re-decoration progressed. Stabilisation (ie underpinning) is not typically completed unless movement is ongoing/progressive and cannot be controlled by mitigation works. At this stage possible causes of movement include leaking drains, the abstraction of moisture from a shrinkable sub-soil, leaking water supply, etc. Site investigations are needed to confirm cause. Monitoring may be needed to confirm movement is neither ongoing/progressive.
- 14) We are pleased to report we saw no evidence of recent/ongoing ground movement such as subsidence, heave &/or landslip to the main building.
- 15) Horizontal cracking exists to the front gable at gutter level and local minor displacement exists to the roof tiles over the gable which suggests the masonry gable is not adequately restrained. No lateral restraint could be seen in the attic from the hatch. We recommend lateral restraint be provided to tie the roof structure/both front/rear masonry gables such as Helifix tying or lateral restraint straps and the cracking cut out/stitched. Poulton Remedial Services Ltd ([www.poultonremedialservices.co.uk](http://www.poultonremedialservices.co.uk)) are known with experience.
- 16) Masonry is assumed solid with external elevations rendered and painted. Where repair is completed it is likely that natural hydraulic lime (NHL) must be used. Without destructive testing we cannot confirm the extent of NHL mortar/render and presence of modern cementious mortar/render. Solid masonry walls of this age require NHL mortar/render and the application of a breathable paint. Cementious mortar/render prevents an NHL masonry wall from breathing.
- 17) Painted render exists externally which appears in reasonable condition as viewed from ground level. Minor vertical cracking exists locally to the render generally above/below window/door openings which requires cutting out & proper repair during normal redecoration. Opening up is needed to confirm no embedded metal exists which is corroding requiring removal. All hollow/de-bonded render and plaster should be replaced.
- 18) External redecoration is needed throughout and should be completed every 3yrs or sooner should deterioration dictate.
- 19) Corroding fixings to external elevations should be removed.
- 20) Although we saw no climbing vegetation to elevations/roofs you should be aware that climbing vegetation should always be removed from elevations. Vegetation growing up from between the external elevations and paths should be removed.
- 21) Timber lintels may exist over original window/door openings. We saw no visible evidence of structural deficiency of lintels over openings however opening up is needed to confirm condition.
- 22) Local cracking and outward movement exists to the rear wall/right corner of the kitchen original addition which requires local repair/rebuild. 2-3mm cracking exists internally to the tile splashback of the kitchen rear wall which requires cutting out/stitching and proper repair during normal decoration. This damage may be associated with leakage from the below ground drainage and should be investigated in the insurance claim mentioned above associated with the rear extension.

- 23) Waste pipes require rework to reduce distance travelled to gullies and improve fall. All pipes should be taken into gullies with appropriate splashback surrounds provided around.
- 24) Local minor horizontal cracking exists to some window/door reveals which is likely to be due to corroding fixings requiring either removal (if redundant) or replacement in non-ferrous form (if not redundant).

#### **Ground Bearing and Suspended Floors:**

- 25) A combination of ground bearing & suspended floors exist. Local minor horizontal gapping exists between the kitchen floor slab and the external elevations which appears historic rather than recent/ongoing although a programme of monitoring is needed to confirm. In the absence of site investigations this gapping is assumed to be settlement caused. If movement continues the floor slab is likely to require replacement.
- 26) Ground floor level is similar to ground level at the front door which results in a risk of surface water entering the property. Ideally ground level should exist at least 150mm below ground floor level. The original drawing suggests the floor was meant to be above ground level.
- 27) It is unlikely that any appropriate damp membrane exists below ground bearing floors and it would be necessary to take up all floors to provide such at which time thermal insulation could be included. If no appropriate sub-base/bedding exists such should be provided.
- 28) A specialist timber treatment contractor such as Poulton Remedial Services Ltd ([www.poultonremedialservices.co.uk](http://www.poultonremedialservices.co.uk)) should attend, check and confirm the condition of timber/woodwork in relation to the presence of wet/dry rot and infestation. Although we did not see evidence of such our inspection was not exhaustive. We cannot confirm the condition of timber/woodwork not accessible.
- 29) No floor coverings or floorboards were lifted & we cannot therefore confirm the condition of floor structure below unless opened up although no visible evidence of a problem was observed. Exposed floorboards exist to the main hall and vinyl type floor coverings exist to the extensions and kitchen.
- 30) We are not aware that a cellar/basement exists.

#### **Dampness, Wet/Dry Rot & Infestation:**

- 31) The external elevations appear to be in solid construction (as expected for the age of the building) and are therefore likely to be damp given the age of the property requiring appropriate internal lining (including waterproof membrane) to prevent internal finishes being affected by damp/water ingress.
- 32) High damp readings were obtained to skirtings especially at critical areas such as door openings. New skirtings would be provided inside the waterproof lining if waterproof lining is provided.
- 33) Wet/dry rot exists to the skirtings in the cloakrooms which requires investigation to confirm cause and appropriate remedials actioned. No infestation was noted to woodwork however our inspection was not exhaustive. We recommend a specialist timber treatment contractor such as Poulton Remedial Services Ltd ([www.poultonremedialservices.co.uk](http://www.poultonremedialservices.co.uk)) attend, check & confirm condition in relation to wet/dry rot and infestation.
- 34) As viewed through a broken air brick on the right flank elevation limited floor depth exists below the suspended ground floor and oversite. A minimum 150mm depth should exist below joist bottoms and be well ventilated. Air bricks should exist at maximum 1500mm centres to all elevations to ventilate. Broken air bricks should be replaced. Any metal air bricks should be replaced in either clay or plastic air bricks.
- 35) Local black condensation staining exists to walls and ceilings especially below flat roofs which suggests a cold bridge problem. Thermal insulation to walls, ceilings and skirtings is recommended.

### Chimney Stacks, Breasts & Flues:

- 36) No chimney breast or stack was observed.
- 37) Flues should be kept well ventilated.

### Internal Walls, Partitions, Ceilings, Skelings & Finishes:

- 38) In the absence of opening up to confirm otherwise internal walls are generally in solid masonry with plaster finish.
- 39) Local minor cracking exists to walls, skelings & ceilings which are generally minor requiring only cutting out/stitching and filling during normal redecoration.
- 40) Given the age & construction of the property limited/no thermal resistance/capacity exists to floors, walls & roofs. Thermal resistance could be improved using appropriate systems. Ground floors would need to be taken up, the roof covering removed, etc to improve thermal resistance.
- 41) Internal decorations are aged requiring redecoration. You should expect at least local repair of finishes. Hollow/de-bonded plaster should be replaced.
- 42) No appropriate mechanical or back-ground ventilation exists to the cloakrooms. We recommend such be provided.

### External Joinery, Doors & Windows:

- 43) External joinery (such as soffits, fascias, barge boards, etc) is in very poor condition requiring significant repair/local replacement and redecoration. Rafter feet to the main roof are exposed. The rear gable barge board is significantly wet rot affected requiring replacement. Given the lack of paint to external joinery and general poor condition we consider replacement throughout is needed. Corroding fixings should be replaced in non-ferrous material.
- 44) External joinery should be redecorated periodically every 3 years or sooner should deterioration dictate.
- 45) Windows and doors are in timber singly glazed in very poor condition requiring replacement in new. Some windows/doors have been heavily repaired in the past especially at cill/threshold levels. Some windows are at risk of falling out and therefore pose a significant risk of injury. Security of the building is reduced given the condition of the windows and doors. We have not checked the operation condition of windows & doors. Ideally new timber windows should be provided although in consideration of both cost and future maintenance double glazed PVCu windows could be considered.
- 46) Internal & external doors require overhaul and easing/adjusting. It is not clear whether the doors off the kitchen have appropriate fire resistance. We anticipate replacement doors are needed.
- 47) It is unlikely that the large glazed window on the front elevation is in safety glass requiring replacement along with the entrance door. A limited structure ply boarded panel exists below the glazing which would benefit from replacement.

### Site & Garden:

- 48) A small lawn area exists to the left of the building which we understand is part of the site.
- 49) Boundary walls and fences are in varying states of condition requiring repair/replacement. Your solicitor should check and confirm both boundary positions and liability/responsibility for such.
- 50) Denbigh Road is particularly narrow with very limited parking outside the building. No off-road parking exists.
- 51) We have not checked the timber shed along the right flank elevation which shows significant lean.
- 52) Local damage and depression exists to the macadam pavement along the front of the building which requires repair/replacement. We assume ESCC are responsible for the pavement?

**Generally:**

- 53) No adequate level access exists into or around the building and should be provided.
- 54) We recommend an asbestos survey be completed on the building. It is a legal requirement of building owners/persons responsible for buildings to ensure an appropriate asbestos survey exists. Potential sources of asbestos include floor slab floor coverings.
- 55) If the water supply is not in blue MDPE we recommend such. We recommend the water supply be checked for leakage.
- 56) Electrics & plumbing lie outside our experience/remit and should be checked by competent & experienced contractors/consultants.
- 57) No fire detection and/or alarm system was observed in the building. We recommend an experienced and qualified Fire Consultant attend the building and advise on requirements.
- 58) No mains gas exists in the village of Hooe.
- 59) The kitchen units, worktop, etc are particularly aged/tired not to commercial grade. No cooking facilities exist.
- 60) We have not had sight of any existing guarantees for work completed to the building.
- 61) We recommend a cctv survey & water test on the below ground foul & storm drainage systems to confirm condition. We assume the property is public sewer connected. If a septic tank, cesspit, treatment plant exists the condition and adequacy of such should be confirmed.
- 62) The electric main is overhead from a nearby telegraph pole which is typical of Hooe village. Appropriate fixing of the cable to the building is needed.

Quotations should be obtained from at least three experienced local contractors for the necessary updating/maintenance and repair/re-decoration however until such quotations are obtained we suggest the following budget costs be considered/expected:

<i>Item:</i>	<i>Budget Cost (£):</i>
i) External scaffold	£12,000.00
ii) Main roof covering replacement	£16,000.00
iii) Local roof timber repair/replacement	£2,500.00
iv) Treatment of roof timbers	£1,000.00
v) Flat roof covering replacement	£16,000.00
vi) External joinery replacement	£8,500.00
vii) External redecoration	£8,000.00
viii) Local render replacement	£5,000.00
ix) Window replacement	£12,000.00
x) Door replacement	£3,000.00
xi) Internal & external crack repairs	£3,500.00
xii) Internal plaster repairs	£3,000.00
xiii) Lateral restraint to gables	£2,500.00
xiv) Internal waterproof lining	£22,000.00
xv) Internal thermal lining to walls	£8,000.00
xvi) Internal thermal resistance to floors	£14,000.00
xvii) Local rebuild of kitchen external wall	£3,500.00
xviii) Replacement glazing/panel to front	£8,500.00
xix) Internal redecoration	£6,000.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£155,000.00</b> excluding VAT.

The above costs do not include kitchen/cloakroom updating, electrics/plumbing updating or works to repair/stabilise the rear addition. Works to repair/stabilise the rear addition would be expected to fall under a building insurance claim. If accepted it is likely a policy excess (typically £1,000.00 no VAT) will apply to the insurance claim.

Please note that we have not inspected woodwork or other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and are, therefore, unable to report that any such part of the property is free from defect.

Where opening up/access/investigations are recommended it is assumed any necessary recommended repair/remedials/replacement following opening up/access/investigation is completed.

You will be aware that this letter of report is not intended as the normal RICS "Homebuyer" Report and that we have not inspected or tested any sewers, drains or services.

This report is solely for the use & benefit of the addressee. No other party may rely on this report unless prior agreed in writing by EAR Sheppard Consulting Civil & Structural Engineers Ltd. Should it be agreed that a third party may rely on this report all fees due to EAR Sheppard Consulting Civil & Structural Engineers Ltd must have been paid.

We trust that this letter of report is sufficient for your immediate requirements but should you have any queries, or if we can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully



RJ Sheppard

BEng (Hons) CEng MICE

**EAR Sheppard Consulting Civil & Structural Engineers Limited**