

**PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Prudhoe East Centre Advisory Group**  
**Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2018 at 6:30pm Meeting Room 2, The Spetchells Centre**

## **PRESENT**

Cllr Russ Greig (Chair), Cllr Jennifer McGee, Cllr Tracy Gilmore, Cllr Gerry Price, Cllr Angie Scott, Cllr Chris Cuthbert, George McCreedy, Alastair Bond (via Skype), County Cllr Gordon Stewart

No apologies received.

It was unclear who the nominated chair for the group was; the Acting Clerk had noted that it was Cllr Russ Greig; however Cllr Jennifer McGee advised that Cllr Gerry Price chaired the previous meeting. Cllr Gerry Price was not expecting to chair the meeting, **it was AGREED** that Cllr Russ Greig would chair the meeting.

### **1. Actions from meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

- ✓ Civic & Community Forum
- ✓ On-line Survey
- ✓ Present results of survey at Annual Town Meeting 17/05/2018
- ✓ Visit East Centre if not already familiar with the building
- ✓ Locate structural Reports from NCC ✓
- ✓ Update Community Asset Transfer Form with agreed alterations

It was previously discussed that members could have a stall at Highfield Fest to promote the transfer of the East Centre and to get further feedback. This now had to be discounted as Cllrs were running their own stalls/helping with car parking, etc. so would not be available to engage on this issue properly.

It was previously discussed that the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) application should be brought to the Town Council meeting at the end of June. The Acting Clerk advised that this would be difficult to achieve in view of other priorities but if members felt that the CAT should be presented before the July meeting then she would ensure it was done, but it would be difficult. **It was AGREED** that the July meeting was soon enough.

**It was AGREED** to find out if it would be possible to gain access to the Adult Learning building.

### **2. East Centre Survey**

**It was AGREED** to receive the results of the East Centre survey.

It was discussed that it was disappointing that only 9 under 18's completed the online survey when this a major target audience for responses. The Acting Clerk advised that many schools in Prudhoe and surrounding villages had shared the survey more than once but Prudhoe Community School stated that it was against their communications policy. The Acting Clerk did ask if an exception could be made in view of the local nature of the questions and its significance to the young people attending the school, but the response was no.

With regards the detailed answers to question 4 that asked about the groups and clubs those surveyed were members of, it was positively received that there were many different groups noted that included sports, drama, dance, environmental, walking, music, political, gardening, play and social.

With regards the detailed answers to question 7 that asked about recent activity attended in Prudhoe it was pleasing that there was a wide range of responses and that those surveyed were clearly attending a wide range of groups in and around Prudhoe so their comments would be very useful.

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Question 9 asked if those surveyed had accessed community groups outside of Prudhoe and 24% of those surveyed had. The group discussed that sometimes the groups sort are not available in Prudhoe, i.e. ASD Support Group, Film Club, Scuba Diving, Deaf Club, Judo, Cricket, Rugby, LGBT Group, which were all listed, but often people choose to travel outside the area for personal reasons. It was also discussed that some of the services in Prudhoe are oversubscribed and there are waiting lists for them, i.e. swimming, gymnastics.

The group discussed that it would be good to offer more from Prudhoe so that people did not have to travel outside the area if they did not want to and that the East Centre being available for use could fill the gaps, rather than completing with the groups already operating.

It was discussed that groups for young people with special educational needs were not available in Prudhoe, hence parents starting Happy Faces. Families are travelling to Newburn and Hexham to access services. **It was AGREED** to find out more about the Arts Studio at Ferndene.

Members discussed the potential in that one quarter of those surveyed felt that the space they used was inadequate for their needs presently and in order for them to expand, this could be a potential target market for the space at The East Centre. Comments from the survey responses in question 10 about the space used by groups also raised issues with parking and accessibility. Members discussed that The East Centre was in the centre of town and served by other amenities, on a bus route, all on one level and with car parking.

Question 11 asked for those surveyed to describe what they thought of the building and members were pleased that over 40% felt the building should be preserved and over 65% that it should be opened up to the public more widely. It was discussed that the positive responses to this question certainly fit with the plans to asset transfer the centre and create a flexible space for use by the community.

It was discussed that in years gone by the centre was used by a variety of groups but that without a centre manager this had fell by the way-side. It was discussed that having someone employed to promote the building would be crucial to its success.

In answering question 12 which asked respondents to rate the state of the East Centre, members discussed that it was very telling that 57% of those surveyed were unable to rate the building as they had not been in or used it, of those who had, the feelings were mixed.

Members discussed that the responses to question 13 that asked what the building should specifically be used for were very wide ranging but most highly rated were a place for meeting hire (52%), a café (53%), a youth club (73%) and a space for community events and activities (71%). Members discussed that it would be very important that the space was flexible so would appeal to a number of

different users. The boxing ring in the main hall was discussed and that this type of activity would make the space inflexible and therefore difficult to hire out.

The final question of the survey was deliberately open and therefore there were a mixture of responses and ideas about how the Town Council could improve delivery of services from the East Centre. Members discussed that presently the run-down appearance of the centre was creating a bad impression of young people and of the town and that no one disagreed that a refurbishment was required.

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### **3. Community Asset Transfer Application**

The Acting Clerk advised that there was enough information to complete the executive summary.

Members discussed that section 10 which asks for the 'Community Benefits' should focus on the benefits of opening up the building to the wider community, young and old which would help community cohesion as well as promoting a thriving town. Members were keen to ensure that the accessibility was also included in this section as discussed above.

The Acting Clerk advised that she would use the results of the survey to describe the evidence of need, focusing on those questions where respondents had indicated they had inadequate space now and to grow and also including that both the Parish Hall and The Spetchells Centre were at capacity.

With regards future use it was discussed that the following suggestions should be included:

- Office space for Prudhoe Town Council
- Workshop Men's shed
- Town Hall; memorabilia and heritage
- Northumberland Citizen's Advice
- Flexible space in main hall for community use

### **4. Structural Reports and Running Costs**

It was discussed that the asbestos report was not complete and a thorough test would need to be carried out.

The Acting Clerk advised that the Town Council would need to engage a solicitor following the agreement of Northumberland County Council to asset transfer the building and that this would prompt building surveys. Members agreed that it would be advantageous to engage an architect at the earliest convenience in order to discuss realistic plans for the building.

The running costs supplied for the building were received and it was discussed that the costs provided could vary greatly. Cllrs discussed that the Town Council would save costs as a tenant at The Spetchells Centre if they moved to the Adult Learning Building that would offset running costs at The East Centre.

The Acting Clerk advised that costs were dependent on how the East Centre would be managed; as a town council asset or as a charitable organisation.

### **5. Future Management of Prudhoe East Youth Centre**

The different charitable models were received and discussed as well as the option of the Town Council running the East Centre as an asset.

It was discussed that there were pros and cons of each and that the group were not able to make a clear recommendation as to which would be best without seeking further information.

The Acting Clerk asked if the members wished the CAT application to be completed with this question left undecided, in the hope that NCC would still be able to make a decision on whether it wished to transfer the building. Members agreed that the CAT application should be completed as much as possible and then following feedback from NCC, further decisions could be taken and information added. The Acting Clerk advised that she would take advice from Kate Steel in Strategic Estates.

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It was AGREED to seek advice from Wayne Daley on the best model moving forward.

It was discussed that the review of the Youth Service was also a major contributing factor to decisions; this was expected to be in the public domain on 5<sup>th</sup> July.

It was AGREED to arrange to meet any local councils who similarly managed a building that was also used by others; Cramlington, Ashington and Morpeth were suggested.

END OF MEETING