Wickham Market Village Hall Update

The decision has been taken to refurbish Wickham Market Village Hall rather than to rebuild it.

***Background***

The central part of the hall was built about 1950, with extensions being added in all four directions over the next few years, forming annexes, back room and reception lobby.

In May 2012 surveyors were appointed to report on the condition of the building. It had become clear that the condition of the village hall was deteriorating. Many items required attention including flat roofs, heating, condition of toilets, electrical systems and insulation amongst other issues. Something needed to be done beyond the normal scope of day to day maintenance.

In October 2013 a committee was formed under the umbrella of the Village Hall Management Committee to consider what should be done about the main building and the associated Archive Centre.

In March 2015 a report was sent to the Parish Council detailing the outcome of public consultation. An open meeting was held, and the Parish Council confirmed rebuild as the preferred course of action and agreed that the Wickham Market Archive Centre should be included.

A planning application was prepared and was submitted to Suffolk Coastal in July 2018 and planning permission was granted on 7th November 2018 (which lasts for 5 years to 2023).

In March 2019 an Open Day sought pledges and donations from the public and local businesses. A wide range of fundraising events have been held over the years and research has been ongoing into grants from various bodies.

***Current situation***

Faced with having to raise a further £1.5 million, at its meeting on 17th September 2020, all members of the New Build Group agreed that because of the national financial crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, there is very little prospect of being able to raise the necessary funding from individuals or organisations, for several years.

It was with regret that the group decided to report this situation to the Village Hall Trustees and to recommend that they set up a Refurbishment Programme. The Trustees have agreed with the recommendation, and the Parish Council’s has also agreed to this new course of action.

At the meeting, Councillor Alan Biddle, who is also Chairman of the New Build Group said “This is disappointing, because Wickham Market deserves a new village hall, but we accept that financial priorities have changed”.

Philip Tallent, Chairman of the Village Hall Trustees said “We will now look at all the refurbishment possibilities for the village hall and establish priorities that meet the needs of the users of our hall. All individuals and groups who have donated to the New Build project will be asked whether they are happy for their donation to be used for refurbishment”.