**Boyton Parish Council Church Hall Committee**

**Summary of findings – 28th March 2023**

**Background**

Boyton Parochial Church Council (PCC) has decided it can no longer manage the church hall which it owns in the village. Boyton Parish Council (BPC) has previously investigated purchase of the hall, but found it unaffordable in the short term. An extraordinary BPC meeting was held on 28th February 2023, at which substantial support was expressed by villagers for retaining the hall for village use, rather than seeing it be sold for development. At that meeting, BPC therefore approved creation of a Church Hall Committee to decide on the most effective approach to the village taking on the lease of the church hall from the PCC. This document summarizes the outcomes of the completed Terms of Reference of that Committee.

**Current values of the hall, and future values which may be realized with more village oversight**

The Committee identified the value of the hall in preserving the historic character of Boyton, and in providing a meeting venue and open space for members of the community. Particular value was noted to families in the community, for whom this is the only safe communal green space in the village for children to play. Practically, the hall also provides the only nearby venue for matters such as Parish Council meetings and voting during elections. As the only area available in the parish for the community to meet, the hall and grounds present a unique value which – if lost – would not be likely to be recovered.

Potential future values discussed were numerous. Particular interest was seen in the hall and grounds being more of a community social hub, with a revitalized fete, coffee mornings, wine and cheese evenings, themed food evenings, baking evenings, art/craft events, etc. The potential value of the hall as a disaster mobilization hub was also recognized, such that members of the community could be coordinated and supported in the event of water or power loss, etc. Last, it was considered that the hall and grounds could potentially be used as a focus for visitors to the village, for example by providing a car park for walkers (to avoid parking on limited road space in the village) or possibly a camp site for limited numbers of visitors. Such suggestions would require further discussion among the community before being taken forward, but also present potential opportunities to fund the lease of the hall.

**Short- and long-term options to lease and buy the hall for the use of the village**

The Committee evaluated eight possible legal structures which might possibly lease – or in the future buy – the hall for the use of the village, namely: (i) Boyton Parish Council; (ii) a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation; (iii) a new Charitable Company limited by guarantee; (iv) a new Community Interest Company; (v) a new Community Benefit Society; (vi) a new Cooperative Society; (vii) a new Unincorporated Association; and (viii) a new Charitable Trust.

Factors considered in evaluating these legal structures were (a) the ability to lease and own property, raise funds, etc.; (b) the personal liability of trustees of any such entity; (c) the Charity status of each structure; and (d) whether voting members were possible.

The only one of the eight structures which can own property, has no significant personal liability for trustees, and is able to be a registered Charity, is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Such a structure has two models – an Association model with many voting members, and a Foundation model with a more limited number of voting members.

Consultation with people involved with Hollesley Village Hall revealed that they have also concluded a CIO Model is most appropriate. Hollesley have pursued a CIO Foundation Model, which still allows them up to 24 trustees – a number which our Committee believes would be plenty for our smaller village.

**Communication with the PCC**

Based on the above findings, the Committee provided a Letter of Intent to the PCC, expressing interest in the village taking on a lease of the hall and grounds, subject to provision of more information and discussion of terms and conditions.

The Committee has sought further information from the PCC, of which some has already been provided. The PCC has suggested it is unable to answer some key questions without involvement of their legal team, so the Committee has encouraged this.

**Communication with Boyton community members**

Members of the Committee have attempted to canvass the whole community of Boyton, to obtain their opinions and interest in the village taking on a lease of the hall and grounds. Of 77 households in Boyton Parish, we managed to have discussions with 32 (we have not yet covered all of the village, and some community members have so far been away from home when we visited).

This effort revealed a very high level of interest – 97% of interviewed households are keen for Boyton to retain the hall and grounds, rather than see it sold, and 88% are invested enough to be paid members of a new organization which is set up to lease and manage the hall and grounds. Sufficient people (eight) volunteered to be Trustees of such an organization, with good numbers (13) also offering help with practical maintenance, running events (12), or direct financial donations.

**Conclusions**

Considering the above findings, the Boyton Parish Hall Church Hall Committee recommends that the village further pursue the lease of the hall and grounds, through the following steps:

1. Obtaining a fuller understanding of potential costs and income, through further discussion with the PCC and investigation into issues such as insurance and rates;
2. Obtaining a fuller understanding of the terms and conditions of a proposed lease from the PCC and their lawyers;
3. Should the above prove positive, establishing a CIO to take on the lease.

The Committee therefore requests that BPC extend the Terms of Reference of the Committee to cover these next steps, as per Annex 1.

**Annex 1**

**Extended Terms of Reference:** **Boyton Parish Council Church Hall Committee**

**Background**

Boyton Parochial Church Council (PCC) has decided it can no longer manage the church hall which it owns in the village. Boyton Parish Council (BPC) has previously investigated purchase of the hall, but found it unaffordable in the short term. An extraordinary BPC meeting was held on 28 February 2023, at which substantial support was expressed by villagers for retaining the hall for village use, rather than seeing it be sold for development. At that meeting, BPC therefore approved creation of a Church Hall Committee to decide on the most effective approach to the village taking on the lease of the church hall from the PCC. A previous ToR outlined the outline of tasks and responsibilities of the committee, which it then completed. This ToR outlines tasks and responsibilities of the committee going forward.

**Membership**

The committee will comprise both councillors (initially represented by Mark Pryor and Richard Jesty) and non-councillors (initially represented by a number of villagers who volunteered in the extraordinary meeting), with membership open to change over time at the decision of the committee. The committee will be chaired by Mark Pryor.

**Previously-achieved tasks**

The committee undertook and achieved the following tasks:

1. Identify current values of the hall to the village, and potential future values which may be realised with more village oversight of the hall;
2. Input to a letter of intent from BPC to the PCC regarding (non-binding) interest in taking over the hall;
3. Investigate short- and long-term options to lease and buy the hall for the use of the village. This will include consideration of all potentially suitable legal structures, including BPC itself and separate entities (e.g., newly-created charities) which may be linked or unlinked to BPC;
4. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of each of these options, in line with current/future values (1, above), including a consideration of financial, legal, liability, insurance and other risks;
5. Liaise with BPC, the PCC, external stakeholders, lawyers and others as necessary in order to undertake the above assessment;
6. Present draft findings to BPC and the public at an open meeting, with a recommendation on the best way forwards, and solicit feedback from BPC and villagers on these findings and recommendation; and
7. Revise findings as necessary, and make a decision on the optimal approach to the village taking on the hall. Document this decision, supporting information, and feed back to BPC.

**New tasks**

The committee will undertake the following tasks:

1. Obtaining a fuller understanding of potential costs and income, through further discussion with the PCC and investigation into issues such as insurance and rates;
2. Obtaining a fuller understanding of the terms and conditions of a proposed lease from the PCC and their lawyers;
3. Should the above be judged by the Committee and potential Trustees to be financially, legally and logistically viable, establishing a CIO to take on the lease.

Unless otherwise decided by BPC, this committee shall cease after completion of these tasks, and the CIO will thereafter take on the lease of the village hall and grounds.

**Responsibilities**

The committee shall:

* Determine the number, time and means of notification for its meetings;
* Determine the presence of the public and media at its meetings; and
* Determine its membership.

The committee shall not:

* Make any decisions on BPC finances, or incur any costs to BPC, without prior approval of BPC, other than charges of room hire at the church hall for the purpose of committee meetings.