

Levens Parish Council

Response to Freedom of Information Request Received from Mr.C.Turner on 2 October 2014

This document provides responses to the questions asked in a Freedom of Information request, received on 2 October 2014 from Mr Colin Turner (on behalf of a number of residents). For clarity, each question has been repeated below, with the Parish Council's response attached.

Peter Davidson
Clerk to the Council

27 Oct 2014

- 1. The Parish Council has indicated that the construction of the new village hall will cost £1m and that conversion of the existing Institute will cost £200k.**
 - a. Exactly how have these estimates been arrived at?
 - b. Please provide copies of any professional advice you or the Levens Community Project Working Group ("Working Group") have received as evidence to support these numbers.
 - c. If in addition, any advice has been oral, rather than written, please list the sources and detailed estimates included in this advice as evidence.
 - a) The architect (Damson Design) has supplied the Parish Council with initial cost estimates. These were provided to the Parish Council in written form – see Attachment 1.
 - b) See a) above
 - c) N/A

- 2. At the last Parish Council meeting on 9 September, it was disclosed that the professional estimates for the funds that could be raised by the sale of land at Sizergh Fell Quarry (SFQ) and Cotes varied widely and include the possibility of a £500k shortfall against the £1.3m overall project cost.**
 - a. Please provide copies of all estimates that you or the Working Group have received valuing the land at SFQ and / or Cotes.
 - b. If in addition, any advice has been oral, rather than written, please list the sources and valuations in this advice as evidence.

- a) The Parish Council received advice from the following estate agents on the potential value of the land at Sizergh Fell and at Cotes:
- Milne Moser: written estimate. See Attachment 2
 - Lancastrian: written estimate. See Attachment 3
 - Thomson Hayton Winkley: written estimate. In an email to the clerk, dated 15 October, the estate agent has stipulated the following caveat: *“As the council is representing the Parishioners I see no harm in allowing such interested people the opportunity of viewing the letter in an open and transparent manner, however I would not wish this to be copied or made available to the public at large or used for publication on e mail or social media. The report is a private one for the Parish Council only and could jeopardize any negotiations which may take place with developers in the sale of the relevant sites”*. In accordance with this caveat, the Parish Council will ensure that the document is available to view, but copies will not be distributed.
 - Michael C.L.Hodgson: written estimate. This document contains the following caveat: *“The contents may be disclosed to all members of the Parish Council and committee members in connection with the purpose of the project, but, for clarity, the contents must not either be used for any other reason or disclosed to any third party”*. The Parish Council is therefore unable to release this document.
 - Hackney & Leigh: See Attachment 4

b) None

3. The Council has disclosed that it has applied to the Homes and Communities Agency for a grant of £50,000 to cover future funding requirements.

- a. Has this application yet been approved by the Agency?**
- b. If so, what conditions are applicable to this grant?**
- c. Please provide copies of all correspondence you or the Working Group have had with the Agency regarding this matter.**

- a) The Parish Council submitted an application for grant funding to H&C agency for funding to cover anticipated costs of £57800. This amount was the estimate from the architect, to take the project through to:
- outline planning submitted for Sizergh, Cotes, Church Hill allotments and Underhill.
 - detailed planning for the village hall and for conversion of the Institute.

H&C agency has approved this application. H&C will fund 90% of the cost estimate submitted, ie £52000.

- b) H&C agency stipulated a phased release of funding. The Council has applied for release of the first tranche of funding, amounting to 50% of the full amount, ie £26000. This funding has been released.
- c) See Attachment 5

4. The Parish Council has stated with confidence that the combined new Village Hall and converted Institute “will provide a sustainable income”, by which we presume it means that combined income will meet or exceed combined expenditure.

- a. Please provide copies of all evidence you or the Working Group have for projected running costs at the new Village Hall during the first five years of its operation.**
 - b. What estimates have been produced to assess rental income, maintenance costs and, therefore, anticipated surplus over the same time period once the existing Institute has been converted into the proposed affordable flats for the elderly? Please provide copies of any evidence for these numbers.**
 - c. What level of income is anticipated from rental of the new Village Hall itself? Please provide copies of any evidence that exists to support this assumption, including hourly charge-out rates and anticipated annual usage.**
- a) To date, the Parish Council has no quantitative evidence. The following qualitative evidence has been gathered:
- A verbal statement from members of the Institute, that the Institute makes a profit.
 - A verbal statement from the architect that the new village hall will be far better insulated than the Institute.
 - Earlier, this year, members of the Working Group visited Galgate, Chipping and Newbiggin village halls. Chipping, in particular, was deemed to be of a similar size and construction to that proposed for Levens. A member of the committee which manages Chipping village hall advised the Working Group (verbally) that the hall breaks even.
- b) None
- c) See a) above.

5. The Parish Council indicated in its minutes of the 12 August extraordinary meeting that Terms of Reference for the Working Group (formerly New Village Hall Committee) would be drawn up and agreed by the Council

- a. Please provide a copy of these terms of reference if they have been drawn up. If they have not yet been drawn up, please advise a date for their release and confirm that the Working Group will not meet again until proper terms of reference have been agreed by the Council.**
- a) Terms of Reference have not yet been drawn up for the Working Group. I can confirm that the Working Group will not meet again until ToR's have been drawn up and agreed by the Parish Council.