

KNOCKBAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL (KCC)

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD IN THE

MISSION HALL ON TUESDAY 4TH MARCH 2014

PRESENT

Owen Smith (OS) Jill Tilford (JT) Rachael Grist (RG)

23 Members of the Community (see Appendix A for names and contact details)

1. HISTORY OF THE MISSION HALL

Jill Tilford (JT) opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. She summarised the history of the Mission Hall, which currently belongs to the Mission and Discipleship Department of the Church of Scotland.

Knockbain Church has used the building since 1935 during which time it has been used by a variety of community groups. On 28th March 2014 the Mission Hall will be handed back to the Mission Board. It will then sit empty and the risk is that current users go elsewhere and don't come back.

In 2010 a survey of the building was carried out, which identified asbestos in the roof and problems with some of the stonework. Repairs of around £50,000 were stated to be needed, which the Mission Board don't want to pay for, hence one of the reasons for the sale of the Mission Hall. The value of the hall at that time with these repairs required was about £75,000.

Mr. Robertson, Trustee for the Church of Scotland, has been approached regarding a community buyout. He has stated that they will want to achieve market value for the hall but they can choose to whom it is sold. A different price may be acceptable if it is sold to the Community rather than a developer or a public body.

2. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Owen Smith (OS), Chairman of Knockbain Community Council took over from JT and summarized the purpose of the meeting:

- To ascertain whether the community want to retain the Mission Hall as a community asset
- To find out if there is enough community support to initiate a community buy out

3. CURRENT USERS

The following groups currently use the Mission Hall:

- Bridge Club (University of the 3rd Age - U3A) - weekly on Monday afternoons
- History Society - monthly
- Soup and Sandwich Lunch Group - weekly on Wednesdays
- Women's Institute (when the school is shut)
- Disabled Ramblers
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Transition Black Isle (TBI)
- The Pier Group
- Other groups when the main Village Hall was closed for refurbishment

Unlike the Committee Room in the main hall, the Mission Hall has disabled access.

The money coming in from rentals currently covers the running costs of the hall. These running costs could be reduced if solar panels are fitted to the south-facing roof.

The main village hall has between 4 to 5 commitments each day, so the Amenities Association don't see the Mission Hall as taking 'business' away from the main hall. Some of the smaller groups that use the main hall could be better accommodated at the Mission Hall (Mother and Baby group, for example). The Amenities Association are currently short staffed and therefore wouldn't be able to manage both facilities and are not willing at the moment to take on responsibility for the Mission Hall.

The Mission Hall has a larger kitchen than the tea bar / kitchen in the school.

The Free Church has community involvement, but not necessarily with a religious input:

- Youth Club (for 8 - 12 year olds)
- Toddler Group
- Soup lunch

It was agreed that there was huge potential for the Mission Hall and it could be used for a variety of activities, including within the church community for 'away days', as well as a shared facility with 'hot desks' that are used on an ongoing basis.

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Pier Group was used as an example of a community group that has been successfully established. This group is successful because one person is very committed and others help out.

To date, the following have been notified of the forthcoming sale by OS:

- Highland Health Board - potential District Nurse Base for the Black Isle
- Diane Campbell - advisor for community buyout groups
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) - Acquisition of Assets

Mr. Robertson, Trustee for the Church of Scotland, has been asked if there is any possibility of leasing the building. This option would have to be considered alongside other offers and would need to be for a minimum of 3 years. Leasing the building would allow breathing space to give the community time to make it work and raise the money to buy the building.

Elgin Bridge Centre was quoted as an example of a building that was acquired from the Free Masons, initially on a 5-year lease basis, that continues to operate successfully.

5. COSTS

Valuation in 2010: £75,000.

Repairs: circa £50,000. It is understood that the repairs are not required immediately and could be delayed for 8 - 10 years. Asbestos is expensive to dispose of - there is a disposal point in Falkirk but at Inverness Cathedral it has cost £200 per hour to test the asbestos and developers are legally obliged to deal with the problem.

It is believed that funds / grants could be made available to pay for the building and the repairs. The Mission Hall used to be a listed building and therefore has a heritage that would need to be taken into account.

6. FUTURE USE

Suggestions for future use were requested but it was recommended that more information be sought regarding the possibility of a lease and what would be involved. JT believes that the Church of Scotland needs the money and is therefore more likely to sell the Mission Hall, rather than lease it.

It was agreed that the facilities at the Mission Hall could pay for themselves, but neighbours are concerned that certain activities / user groups could be disruptive. Despite reservations, neighbouring residents don't want to lose it as a community asset but ask if its usage could be restricted to 'respectable use'.

If the Mission Hall was to be used by the Health Board, this may conflict with community usage if both require ground floor disabled access. The Inverness Bridge Club are discussing their level of interest at a meeting on Monday 10th March. They would need a storage cupboard on the ground floor. They meet every Monday night plus occasional games / matches. If the Health Board were upstairs, there might be a conflict of use.

The community would therefore prefer that the Health Board liaised with the Community group regarding a sublet, rather than have sole usage.

It is believed that currently there are two other parties interested in the Mission Hall: one to convert it into a private house and one to convert the building into flats.

7. LEVEL OF SUPPORT

OS asked the group for a show of hands in response to the following two questions:

- Should there be a steering group?
- Would anyone be prepared to run a steering group?

The group felt that they needed more information and that other residents should be made aware of the discussions. There was an offer from one member of the public to reconfigure the webpage for the Mission Hall so that all the information can be stored electronically and be accessed by a wider audience. It was also suggested that the press be informed. Prior to the meeting posters and 600 fliers were distributed round North Kessock and surrounding area.

8. ACTIONS

The following actions were agreed, in order to find out more information to enable the group to make a decision on how to proceed:

- Explore the possibility of leasing the Mission Hall
- Ascertain a more recent valuation for the building
- Explore the possibility of funding / grants
- Register interest as a Community buyout
- Organise a press release to increase awareness
- Explore how to make the most of this community facility

The majority of attendees were in favour of retaining the facility as a community asset after exploring the aforementioned actions.

The meeting ended at approximately 9.00pm.