

## **Protecting the Village Hall Legacy**

Residents can be assured that there are **no plans to demolish or alter the character of the Village Hall.**

When the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was agreed five years ago it included the development of a new community centre on the site of the Glebelands Centre funded through the development of land behind the Henty Arms and the purchase of an additional plot for house building. It was suggested also that additional funds could be generated by the sale of the Village Hall. Housing would be developed on the Village Hall footprint and the allotments would be relocated elsewhere.

Five years on and nothing has happened. During this time, the Village Hall Trustees have consistently sought review and clarification of progress particularly regarding the on-going economic viability of the NP. They have continued to exercise sound financial and operational management in order to protect the Henty family legacy. Following their own “due diligence” they informed the Parish Council that they no longer wished to be part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

There is now no prospect of a new building on the Glebelands site unless significant amounts of new money can be found from current and future residents. A limited development is now envisaged but the Parish Council reserves would be totally depleted in purchasing even a heavily discounted freehold. This would leave no financial headroom for even basic refurbishment, renovation or development. There appears to be very limited understanding of the current and future liabilities that would be created from such a purchase. As an asset, the income potential of Glebelands is at best meagre.

The Parish Council “will shortly be setting up a working group to research and recommend a preferred course of action so that when the time comes to make a decision on the purchase, the necessary information will be available”. This group will need considerable expertise and time if it is to produce a suitable “business case” for Glebelands. Professional input will be needed to successfully shape and control all aspects of time, cost and quality within this extensive project. These costs will inevitably be charges to residents’ council tax bills in the future. We all have a duty to keep a careful eye on this situation and to ensure that a costed, appropriate and economically viable business plan is written and then delivered, preferably after a village referendum.

Chair of Trustees, Ferring Village Hall