POTENTIAL USES

Some Background

The parish conducted a survey of the perceived needs of the general public in December 2022. Top of the list was a Parish Hub. Its purpose would be to collect together many of the existing services within the parish, as well as providing meeting places for groups such as the luncheon club who have been made homeless since the closure of the Methodist Church and groups looking to hold meetings in smaller spaces.

We do have two other parish community spaces: the Blake Hall and the David Hall. The Blake Hall has a long-established social club operating downstairs, with a large upstairs space for community groups to meet. This is a difficult space for disabled access and is not easily partitioned up for multiple uses. It is well used, particularly during the daytime.

The David Hall is a popular performance space and attracts audiences from a wide area with its programme of music, theatre and film. It also hosts meetings for a number of local clubs and organisations, and occasional larger community events. The Hall is privately owned by the David Hall Trust which runs and manages the space.

Discussions have been held with both Halls to clarify that, while there will be some overlap, the Methodist site is well placed to offer a wider range of services to the community.

The parish is on a significant growth path and it looks as if approval for several hundred new houses is now inevitable and the existing public space capacity will soon be saturated within the existing halls.

Planned and Projected Uses

When the Community Survey was conducted, parishioners were asked to give their views on the uses to which the Methodist complex (Church, Hall, School Room) might be put.

These would include:

LIBRARY RELOCATION

The existing Library is in a converted and rented shop space. It has an existing team of committed volunteers and a well-established management structure. It is a well-supported service within the village and hosts talks, book readings and activities aimed at children and an expanding range of community services. Due to its popularity and the changing demands on libraries, the space available is insufficient for its needs. The existing lease term of the premises will expire 31st March 2026 so there is some urgency in securing a more appropriate location. There is a Friends group, established as a charity, to provide ongoing support and resource acquisition.

LOCAL INFORMATION CENTRE

This is currently housed in the library and managed and run by the library volunteers. Display space and consultation activities are notably restricted within the existing space. Liaison has been established with county and community organisations

PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES

Currently the parish council office is in a small, rented office at Frogmary Green Farm on the outskirts of the village. It is around half a mile walk from the village centre along a busy road which many see as dangerous. There is also a clear cost saving for the parish with rent, rates, heating and communications. Currently the parish council has its monthly meetings in the Blake Hall, this is not ideal as it at the top of a long flight of steps. At best this is difficult for people with mobility issues who wish to attend the public part of the meetings. The building also has sufficient space for storage of parish equipment (this is currently rented.) It could also provide a home for the village archive.

COMMUNITY CAFÉ/KITCHEN/WARM HUB

The building has two well appointed kitchens, one of which has been used for a luncheon club for several years. These facilities could be made available on hire to charities, the general public and for community events. A community café could be established.

The school room side has a smaller meeting area and could act as a warm hub without any great expense.

The existing luncheon club would be able to make use of their traditional space

Other suggestions were as follows – with some notes on considerations which would need to be made.

BUSINESS/WORKSHOP UNITS

- Community need established?
- Expenditure creating discrete spaces
- Equipment/IT provision
- Management
- Business rates

EVENT SPACE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Community need established?
- Possible dedicated use of School Room(s)
- Careful thought re- decoration to appeal to wide age-range
- Storage for equipment
- Health and safety
- Insurance
- Management

FOOD BANK

- Community need established.
- Management
- Recruitment of volunteers
- Nature of provision
- Storage
- Access issues

LETTINGS / EXISTING AND NEW GROUPS AND CLUBS

- Community need established.
- Pricing policy to be established.
- Liaison with other community providers
- Expansion of current offer
- Upgrade to facilities, e.g. IT
- Redecoration
- Storage issues
- Management

POST OFFICE / BANKING HUB

Whilst clearly seen by parishioners as highly desirable, a significant number of hurdles would need to be overcome.

- Community need established.
- Named and trained sub-postmaster required + team of volunteers.
- Dedicated space made available.
- Need to meet Post Office requirements. Security issues.
- IT requirements
- Possible development as banking hub

SURGERY SPACE

- Community need established.
- Confidential meeting spaces required.
- Enhancement and expansion of offer to local and national charities and support groups

POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL USES

- Local community archive space
- Community display space
- Space that could be used in the event of a local emergency

Clearly, a deal more research will be needed to establish the viability of the above. The grant awarded by the Architectural Heritage Fund will enable the Project Group to establish which of these functions can operate within the buildings and which will generate sufficient income to be sustainable.

The Community Hub Project Group can be contacted:

by email: thehubsouthpetherton@gmail.com

or messages may be left at the Library.

A Facebook page and website will be established in time.