

### **Clubhouse Report for APM 2023**

MKCC is currently conducting a postal poll that will help the Parish Council decide whether residents want the clubhouse to proceed. I see from one of my rare forays onto FB that some residents are unsure of the history so forgive me if I start with the background before going onto the current position.

The Carrington Arms closed 15 years ago in 2008. Since then, there have been many attempts to persuade the owner, Simon Hill, to re-open it including a Pub Action Group, of which I was a member, an initiative with CAMRA which Steve Bradbury was involved with and attempts led by John Keane to make the building safe and redecorated. Despite all these, in March last year, Simon Hill came to our meeting and said he no longer wanted to redevelop it and intended to sell it. He offered the Parish Council first refusal but at market rates. We looked at what was involved, specifically we looked at the building(!), and decided it was beyond both our ability and our financial resources.

I am aware that a resident with the requisite ability has formed a group to look again at possibilities for the building and I have offered the research we did and any support I can give. However, we think the likelihood of a financial return on the investment required is poor for a pub especially in an environment where 50 pubs a week are closing in England and Wales and there is a major problem in the lack of parking space.

However, whenever we have done a survey in the village, opening the pub still remained the top priority among residents. We have a population of 1100 and one would expect a pub in a village this size.

The Parish Council had negotiated planning gain associated with the new Carrington Grove development for a number of areas and decided to put this towards extending the cricket pavilion and creating a clubhouse open to all residents.

We are aware of other suggestions such as a boardwalk to the Navigation but these would be outside of the scope of the planning gain as would be refurbishing the Carrington. In fact, all other potential uses of the money have either already been done, such as the adult exercise and play area equipment, or have access to other parts of the S106 settlement such as the school, pre-school, surgery or youth club.

The clubhouse idea was discussed in 2022. There was a big article in the Castlethorpe News in April last year and updates in the September and December editions. In January this year, there were two big meetings and a smaller one with Thrupp residents and changes to the plans were made to address their concerns. An update was in the March edition of the News as well as at each of the monthly Parish Council meetings

A Project Board has been established with individuals who can contribute specific skills in construction management, heating systems, planning and building design, interior design and finance plus the cricket club as it is their pavilion we are remodelling.

We have submitted a planning application which can be viewed online at MKCC website though the drawing is the same as in the poll leaflet you will all have received. The decision

date for the planning application is 10<sup>th</sup> July. At the same time, detailed specifications have been drawn up ready for an invitation to tender to be issued.

The promised Parish Poll is now in progress and the result will be announced at the Parish Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Having voted myself, can I digress slightly as I did find the voting instructions a bit confusing? It is a double envelope system for voter security. What you do is tear the perforated voting slip in two. You vote on one half and put it in the brown envelope turned so your voting number, not your vote, shows through the envelope window. You put the brown envelope in the white envelope. You write your name and signature on the other half and also put it in the white envelope turned so the MK Council address shows through that window and put it in the post. No stamp is needed.

I have seen some comments that implies that the Parish Council has its own agenda on the clubhouse. Let me be clear, and I am confident that I am speaking with all members of the Parish Council, our agenda is your agenda. We communicate with you, we listen and we decide with the judgement for which you elect us. Of course, nothing gets 100% support but we always act in the best interests of the village as a whole.

We are approaching the project in two phases. Phase One is for the building work to remodel the pavilion and construct the clubhouse. The pavilion will be fully fitted out and will provide larger changing rooms, new toilets and a small parish office. The pavilion has to be ready for the start of the cricket season in April, which should be doable as it is about two months work. The clubhouse extension will take a bit longer to complete.

Assuming residents support the project, MKCC give planning permission and the quotes are within our budget, we will award the Phase One contract in July.

Phase Two will be fitting out the bar, kitchen and lounge area of the clubhouse and will be awarded later in the year.

I can't talk in any detail about money because this is commercially sensitive to potential suppliers. We have made a request for the planning gain funds to MKCC and expect formal approval in June. What I can say is that we have a professional estimate and we have identified nearly all the money for Phase One – we may need some small grants depending on the final quotes.

Phase Two, fitting out the clubhouse, is not yet funded. The Parish Council may need to borrow money from the PWLB but this has a very low rate of interest. However, we would expect, over the course of the rest of the year, to finalise the specification for the fitout, get quotes and seek grants.

It will be a Members Club with all residents given free membership and able to sign in guests. I see some questions about hours of opening and will a coffee service be available every day. It isn't possible to answer this now as it will depend on how much we all want to use it though we have said that larger functions and parties will remain at the village hall. I know some people like certainty. I can only say that I have been through this before. Fifteen years ago, there were objectors to the shop who said it would be a white elephant and end

up as a sorting office for the Royal Mail. They could have been right but they weren't and I hope that the clubhouse will enjoy the same sort of success.

Please fill in your postal voting forms and send them to MKCC. You may feel it is unnecessary and that there will be a majority in favour anyway but this is not necessarily the case and certainly strong village support will help our chances of getting grants especially for fitting out the clubhouse.

Cheers,

**Philip Ayles**  
**Chair, Castlethorpe Parish Council**

### **Discussion:-**

A member of the public expressed his disappointment that a worked through business plan and operating costs were not yet available so residents could make an informed decision before voting. Concerns over the need to take out a public works loan with no indication of how long the village would be paying this back was also raised together with what the effect would be Council Tax and what does the S106 monies cover?

Cllr Ayles said that the project board, consisting of very competent individuals, have taken the time to get the application in. It isn't possible to finalise an operating model at this stage with all the unknowns so you have to assume that if the village votes in favour they will use it which will therefore generate the business for it.

Cllr Sawbridge and Cllr Bradbury raised the points that even if the villagers don't use it, it would be a facility for the people using sports club, who have a mix of people attending and felt that providing improved facilities for this alone would be a good use of S106 monies. This was agreed and would provide a base level but it is the intention for it to be used by the whole village.

The Parish Council is looking at grants available to help fund the fit out and if necessary, although not desired, a lower spec may need to be considered but, until the quotes are in, it is not possible to confirm at this stage.