

Forest Row Parish Council

Clerk:
Email:

Mr David O'Driscoll
parishclerk@forestrow.gov.uk

(Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm)



To: All members of FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL:
Cllrs. Eichner (Chair), Christie, Cocks, Evans,
Gilbert, Hugo, Jaffay, La Djoie, T Lewin, Rainbow,
Scott, Summers, Taylor-Smith, Volkers & A M
Waters

Community Centre
Hartfield Road
Forest Row
East Sussex
RH18 5DZ

Tel: 01342 822661
Fax: 01342 825739
Email: info@forestrow.gov.uk
Website: www.forestrow.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,
Your attendance is required at an extra-ordinary meeting
of the FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL to be held on
THURSDAY 16th MAY 2024 in the Garden Room at the
Community Centre at **7.00 PM**.

Date: 10th May 2024

Mr David O'Driscoll
Clerk to Forest Row Parish Council

THE FIRST FIFTEEN MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONS AND REMARKS FROM THE PUBLIC.
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO STAY AND ADD QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ON THE
AGENDA ITEMS, AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING

AGENDA

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
3. TO DEFER CONSIDERATION OF THE RECORDS OF MEETING OF 30th APRIL 2024
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS/DISPENSATION REQUESTS FOR THIS MEETING
5. THE FUTURE OF THE HAMBRO HALL
6. D-DAY COMMEMORATION
7. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY FULL COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE

COUNCILLORS' BRIEFING TO THE EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON 16th MAY 2024
--

PRELIMINARIES

As is usual with an extra-ordinary meeting, the formal items will be deferred to the next ordinary meeting. The supporters of the various Hambro options will doubtless prefer to speak in the relevant section of the agenda.

As to the issue of interests, I have considered the case of Cllrs Lewin & Waters, who are members of the Shed project working group. They clearly have a definite point of view, but this does not necessarily make them pre-determined, and my view is that they should be free to participate in the discussion. I also believe they are free to vote, but it is a matter for them whether they choose to do so.

5. THE FUTURE OF THE HAMBRO HALL

This issue has already been discussed both at Finance & Policy (16th April) and at Full Council (30th April). F&P decided it was a serious enough issue for referral to Full Council, and after a lengthy discussion, Full Council deferred the matter for further information to this Extra-ordinary meeting.

For completeness' sake, I reproduce the substance of the original briefing note:

The preschool closed at the end of March. We have been in negotiation with the trustees for a 'run-off period': they have some administration to complete and need to dispose of their equipment. We suggested two months from the date of closure, and they have confirmed sufficient funds to cover the rent for that period. During the same period I am arranging for a condition survey of the Hall and its grounds (due to take place on 15th May) to see what works may need doing, and in what order of priority.

The policy decision for Council is what status we now give to the Hall and its ancillary spaces, and there are now four proposals for Council to consider. [I have taken off the table the original option of retaining the building as an ancillary hiring space, on a par with the Community Centre. This poses all manner of logistical problems and makes no economic sense].

Proposal 1 is to lease the building to a commercial nursery (which is an established business in the area with several sites). We were approached by them, they have viewed the premises, and 'without prejudice' discussions have suggested mutually acceptable terms could be agreed. One of their managers attended the Full Council meeting and answered questions. He has since provided some back-up figures and a link to the voluminous East Sussex statistics on childcare. The text of his note is attached.

Proposal 2A was to use the building as an initial home for the Shed project and some ancillary activities. In its first iteration, the building would remain in Council ownership but be occupied by the Shed project as a 'starter premises', for between 18-24 months, to get practical activities going (including some refurbishment work on the building itself) and to

store tools and other materials for later use. The Shed would then convert to an independent enterprise and move to a newbuild on Council land behind the groundsmen's garage. The Hall itself would once again be freed up for other occupiers.

Proposal 2B This is essentially the same as the above, but with a longer timescale – up to four years, more concrete detail as to use by other groups, and specific proposals for a rent payment to the Council. This should now be seen as the firm proposal on behalf of the Shed project and the detail is set out in the attached paper.

Proposal 3. This is essentially a variation on proposal 2B, in that FrowResource would become the tenants and be responsible for the rent on the basis of a lease. It would then sublet to The Shed Project and certain allied activities. An outline business case is attached.

Proposal 4. This has been submitted since the Full Council meeting, on behalf of the charity 'On My Side'. which currently leases the former youth building, now called 'The Cube' as an activity centre for its residents. Their proposal would be to move over to the Hambro Hall and turn that into its activity centre for an increased membership – they have now purchased additional residential accommodation in the village. They would then relinquish The Cube, which could be available for the Shed as its 'starter premises', or for some other purpose. I am attaching the written proposal from the 'On My Side' manager: although this does not fully flesh out the proposal or provide financial figures, the organisation has already proved to be well-organised and solidly resourced, so this may be considered as a firm proposal.

This is a difficult and critical decision for Council, with different factors in play, in terms of both financial worth and community benefit.

- Proposal 1 would provide the financial benefit of a regular market rent, adding to the Council's resources to fund community projects. It also has the social benefit of providing a key service for local children and their parents in an area where there is perceived under-provision (even allowing for the primary school taking over the former pre-school). The drawback would be to take the premises wholly out of Council use, together with any availability for community project overspill.
- Proposal 2 would allow the Shed project to start up in earnest, with the social benefits deriving from its activities, and also act as a test bed for its future development and popularity. It would also provide capacity for other community activities. with the potential for cross-cooperation with the Shed project. The drawback would be financial, in that even a proxy rent would be unlikely to meet market levels. It also envisages a maximum occupation period of four years, which would leave a future Council with the same decision process.
- Proposal 3 has similar community benefits in view as proposal 2, and adds into that a regular rent and tenancy more akin to a market rate. The possible drawback is that unless the tenancy contained user covenants (which might be felt onerous) the Council would not have a say in any subletting arrangements.
- Proposal 4 extends the current 'Cube' arrangements to a larger premises with a local and clearly thriving charity, and also envisages a greater degree of integration with other community activities. It also promises a regular rent and frees up a recently refurbished space for alternative uses, so importing financial benefits as well. The obvious drawback is that unless the Shed project scales back its ambitions, it would leave that project without a current home.

- Clearly, Proposal 1 also excludes the Shed project (and any linked projects) from use of the Hambro premises. On the other hand, Proposals 2-4 would have a negative impact on childcare provision in the village: the proposers have said they would continue to look for premises, but Forest Row is currently quite short of available similar spaces.

There are clearly further questions that could be asked of any of the above proposals, and none of them have completed a formal 'due diligence' procedure. However, it is suggested that the identity and standing of all those persons and organisations is sufficiently well-known to Council to enable a fair and reliable decision to be made. And in fairness to all parties involved, that decision needs to be made now, and not further deferred.

ACTION: to decide as appropriate

6. D-DAY COMMEMORATION

Following Council's decision on 30th April , we have purchased a Peace Lamp and a commemorative flag. However, because of a lack of manpower and other commitments, the British Legion is not holding any form of outdoor ceremony to mark the event.

Does Council want simply to raise the flag and light the lamp at appropriate moments on the day, or do we want to include some modest form of ceremony. If the latter, what will be the content and who will organise it

ACTION: to decide as appropriate

7. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY FULL COUNCIL OR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

As per usual

**Note on local area childcare provision
from the proponents of Hambro Hall / Proposal 1**

Our settings in similar villages tend to have around 15% who come from outside the village, I would imagine a similar trend in Forest Row.

The childcare choices website gives a broad understanding of the overall funding position. I think the key information here is that every child from 9 months to 4 years will be entitled to 15 hours of funded childcare, with working parents entitled to another 15. I believe this is a core number when applied to the village population number and will far exceed the 26 places at Ashdown Day Nursery and the handful of childminders. I believe this is also implied by our keenness to bring a nursery to the village.

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

The most recent Ofsted results for the village (attached) show:

Preschool – Jan 23 – 31 children attending a 35 place setting.

Ashdown Day Nursery – Oct 21 – 72 children attending a 26 place setting (a huge ratio)

3 childminders with single digit capacity

This is the link to East Sussex sufficiency information. It is worth noting that when this information was compiled, the preschool was still operating and provided space for 35 children.

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/children-families/key-policies/childcare-sufficiency-duty-2024>

Key points :

1. FrowResource, Repair Café Forest Row and FR Shed Project wish to secure the Hambro Hall for the benefit of the whole community.
2. The vision is for Hambro Hall to host a wide range of creative and community-building activities including the Community Shed, Repair Café breakout sessions, sewing and knitting groups, craft groups, veg growing, social prescribing, activities for home-schooled children, cooking classes and many more. It will grow to be the heart of our community.
3. The Hall will welcome and help foster new initiatives and will be open as much of the week as possible.
4. The Hall will be a drop-off and sorting point for goods destined for the Second Life community shop. Second Life will store some goods too.
5. The rent for the Hall will initially be provided by a combination of: an upfront donation from FRowReSource covering the first year; monthly subs from Community Shed members; donations from Repair Café customers; charges for participation in sewing, knitting, craft, art and other groups. It will be a community enterprise, open to all and not dependent on who can afford to use the services provided. It will not be a commercial enterprise

What do we want?

Acting together, FrowResource, Forest Row Repair café and the FR Community Shed Project wish to secure the Hambro Hall for the village community.

We will develop it into a thriving creative hub for the whole community, at the same time seeking to draw in previously excluded groups who may be isolated, lonely, or in need of social contact. Activities taking place in and around the Hall will actively foster social cohesion, help form new connections and friendships and promote intergenerational links.

It is important to note that the intention is for community groups to come together under the overall aegis of FRowReSource.

In this connection the example of nearby Mayfield & Five Ashes is very instructive. These two neighbouring villages benefit from an independent community services organisation, Mayfacs, which offers residents a wide variety of activities including a Shed, Repair Café, film showings and regular cultural outings. Thanks to the grant funding available to independent organisations, these activities can be delivered to residents free or at very low cost. With FrowResource able to take on an umbrella role, Forest Row has the potential to develop a high level of community benefit similar to that achieved by Mayfacs.

Context

The Hambro Hall is a valuable asset in the heart of the village, with excellent access for all forms of mobility. It is vital that it is retained by the community for activities that directly and visibly benefit the community.

This comes in the context of significant social and economic pressures affecting many sectors of our community following years of austerity, the Covid lockdowns and

underinvestment in community services. Rebuilding these fragmented relationships will be an important element in the mission of the Hambro project.

Many fresh and imaginative initiatives lie just under the surface in our community, but the threshold for bringing these initiatives to fruition is often dauntingly high. The Hambro project will be able to help mentor and develop such initiatives.

What activities will Hambro host?

As mentioned briefly above, the principal activities at the Hambro Hall will initially be the Community Shed (see below for more information), sewing and knitting groups, craft groups, upcycling initiatives, art groups, cooking classes and the provision of teaching spaces for things like cycle maintenance, wreath-making and project mentoring. In addition, the Hall could host workspaces for hot-desking or meetings, and the outside area could include a garden for the growing of vegetables and other produce.

With the Repair Café often oversubscribed for its monthly sessions, the Hambro Hall could provide a midweek facility for customers with items to repair. This would require the Shed to be in session.

Further down the line, and subject to the necessary safeguarding processes, the Hambro could also host junior Repair Café sessions, where children learn the basics of dismantling, repairing and reassembling everyday items.

Many of the above activities would be well suited to helping needy or unwell individuals who have been given social prescriptions by their medical practitioner.

Who benefits?

The whole community, and especially those who are lonely, socially isolated or experiencing mental health issues. The Hambro Hall will bring together a broad spectrum of users, from home-schooling children to parents and toddlers, and from teenagers to the elderly, especially men, who are isolated and rarely get the opportunity to socialise or engage in communal activity. These linkages will help build bridges between different elements in our community, forging new bonds between different generations and helping to reinforce social cohesion in the village.

Who pays?

FrowResource has kindly offered to cover the Hambro Hall rent for the first year, providing financial reassurance for the Parish Council and allowing initiatives within the Hall to be fostered safely until ready to prosper independently by themselves.

While it is unlikely that the Hambro Hall project could ever match the high rents being offered by profit-driven commercial bidders for the space, the Hall will develop a very valuable role as a creative hub and inspiration to the community. As such, its reputation will grow, its initiatives will multiply and flourish, and the fees and donations from its members and participants will rise accordingly.

It is hoped that, long term, the Hall will be able to go beyond covering its costs and be able provide a financial return to the Council, though it must be stressed that the project's priorities will always be social and community-focused, rather than to generate profit.

Timetable

- Years 1-2: the main focus of Year 1 will be setting up the Community Shed, attracting members and taking up offers of fittings and equipment. Initial work will involve assessing the repairs and updating needed for the building, then developing and actioning a plan to deliver this. It is envisaged that the Shed will be self-funding once set up, with income from membership subs and sales of items the members have made.

During this first phase the Shed plans to become a CIO charity and is “midwived” to the community as an independent venture eligible for external grant funding.

Remediation of the building by Shed members, where appropriate, will begin, and some community craft and art groups and other activities may be able to start.

Throughout, members will be developing policy and promotional material, invitations and open days, and fundraising.

- Years 2-3: Further expansion of Shed Project and other activities; grants attracted by the Shed enable it to contribute to rent. Development of a subscription/payment model for other groups and activities; further promotion and open sessions. Refinement of business model to allow spaces to be rented out. Finalising of administrative framework to allow social prescribing activities to be accommodated. Income now more substantial.
- Years 3-4: Planning begins for the new Shed Project site near skate park. Further development of initiatives within Hambro Hall; selected initiatives also able to attract grants to help cover Hall rent and running costs.
- Years 4-5: With community input, the new Shed Project building approaches completion and all shed equipment is transferred to the new location. Space and time slots are liberated in Hambro Hall for a fresh round of initiatives and activities.

Why the Community Shed is so important

The Shed Project aims to establish a thriving hub for people of all ages to get together in a creative, non-threatening environment to build and repair things, to assist other residents, to socialise, chat and form new connections and friendships. The Shed will encourage connectivity, help reduce social isolation and help with the mental health of its members.

In particular, older members of the Shed community can form intergenerational links with youth groups, to help mentor them in creative and practical skills, and to serve as role models when it comes to social conduct and perhaps even career choice. It is anticipated that social prescribing will be an important community service provided by the Shed: this is the case with Sheds elsewhere in the UK.

There is no other organisation in the village providing this service.

The Shed will work in tandem with other well-established initiatives in the village, including the Repair Café, the VENUe, FrowResource and the Second Life community shop. On a practical level our initial aim is to facilitate the re-use, recycling and upcycling of items and materials that would otherwise go to waste. Later, the Shed could become a focal point for further initiatives aimed at supporting mental health and community cohesion, such as social prescribing, group activities, a welcoming meeting space and the creation of craft items for sale to benefit the community. A Library of Things could follow as a later extension.

The current plan is an ambitious one: it is hoped that we can undertake a genuine community build. We hope that Forest Row residents will join us to help build our dedicated architect-designed structure on a small corner of land adjacent to the skate park, employing as many reclaimed and low-carbon materials as possible.

Tony Lewin: May 10th 2024

[BACKING PAPER TO PROPOSAL 3]

To the Parish Council,

Whilst all the details have not been fully worked out yet, Frow Resource is fully committed to the idea of securing the Hambro Hall for the benefit of whole community in collaboration with the FR Shed Project, the Repair Café and potentially other community groups too.

We support and agree with the principles of the Community Vision for Hambro Hall as set out by the FR Shed Project. Our commitment extends to a willingness to take on the lease of the premises to further the aims of the Community Vision and allowing collaborating organisations to make a fast start on operating the FR Shed Project, the Repair Café and other community activities either as a furtherance to current activities in a better setting or as a proof of concept for new activities.

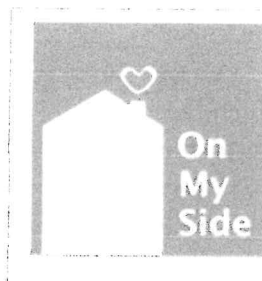
Frow Resource would take responsibility for ensuring rent is paid fully and timely using our existing resources but would also seek to recover some of the financial commitment from the collaborating organisations.

Frow Resource would also look to incorporating several of its own start up projects into the range of activities to take place at Hambro Hall including a proof of concept food waste composting scheme (please note it is unlikely that Hambro Hall will be the principle site for this project but more of a 'shop window' and education centre for the project) and remade/recycled clothing initiative called The FR Collective.

Frow Resource is happy to give the Parish Council full details on all our projects.

For the longer term if/when a permanent home is found for the FR Shed Project, at or before the time our other lease commitments expire we would look to move all or more of our activities into the Hambro Hall whilst working with our collaborators to ensure services to the community that have proved popular and viable are able to continue. In this way we see our commitment as a long term commitment to the community in consultation with collaboration partners, the Parish Council, the community and wider agents of expertise and experience.

We ask that the Parish Council agrees in principle for the Hambro Hall to be set aside for community not commercial activity. Following on from this we will swiftly conclude our discussions with other parties and work with the Parish Council on the details of leasing the property with a view to taking it on at the end of its existing lease.



On My Side
The Administrative Office
Fairborne House,
Chapel Lane,
Forest Row,
RH18 5BU

PROPOSAL 4

08/05/2024

Mr. D. O'Driscoll (Clerk to the Forest Row Parish Council)

Forest Row, Community Centre, Hartfield Rd, Forest Row RH18 5DZ

Subject: Proposal to Relocate On My Side Disability Resource Centre from the Cube to the Hambro Hall, Forest Row.

Dear David,

I am writing on behalf of On My Side, a Forest Row charity dedicated to providing support and services for adults with learning disabilities in our community. We are excited to express interest in a unique opportunity that has arisen, which we believe has the potential to significantly enhance our ability to serve our beneficiaries and contribute positively to the local community.

Currently, our Disability Resource Centre, known affectionately as "The Cube," serves as a hub for a variety of work and work-related activities aimed at empowering individuals with learning disabilities. Within The Cube, we offer a range of engaging activities, including arts and soft materials workshops, Trainworks, Pottery sessions, and Woodland craft activities. These programs not only provide valuable skills development and creative expression opportunities but also foster a sense of community and belonging among our participants.

Recently, we became aware of an empty premises adjacent to The Cube (Hambro Hall), which offers a much larger area for expansion and development of our services. We see this as a golden opportunity to amplify our impact and better meet the needs of the individuals we support. We envision transforming this space into an inclusive facility that will serve as a vibrant hub for learning, creativity, and community engagement.

Here are some key aspects of our proposal:

- **Expanded Service Provision:** The new premises will allow us to expand our existing programs and introduce new initiatives to cater to a wider range of interests and abilities. This includes the potential to offer additional vocational training opportunities, information sharing services, and social inclusion activities.
- **Enhanced Accessibility:** We are committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to all members of the community, including those with mobility



On My Side
The Administrative Office
Fairborne House,
Chapel Lane,
Forest Row,
RH18 5BU

challenges. The new premises will be designed and equipped to meet the standards of accessibility, ensuring that everyone can participate fully in our programs.

- **Community Engagement:** We see the new premises as more than just a facility; it will be a community resource where people of all abilities can come together to learn, create, and connect. We will actively seek input from local residents, businesses, and organizations to ensure that the space reflects the needs and aspirations of the community.
- **Economic Benefits:** By revitalising a vacant property and creating new opportunities for skills development and employment, our proposal will contribute to the economic vitality of the area. We anticipate that the expanded Disability Resource Centre will generate positive social and economic impacts for the local community.

In conclusion, we believe that relocating our Disability Resource Centre to the new premises represents a significant opportunity to enhance the lives of individuals with learning disabilities and strengthen community cohesion. We are eager to discuss our proposal further and explore how we can work together to make this vision a reality.

Thank you for considering our proposal. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with the Parish Council and other stakeholders to bring about positive change for our community.

Sincerely,

Olya Scott,

Independent Living Manager

On My Side