

Supporting Memorial Social Centre to improve ICT Connectivity

Wickhambrook Parish Council ordinarily holds its meetings in the Pavilion of the Memorial Social Centre.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, and restrictions on meetings it has moved to holding remote meetings. One un-anticipated aspect of holding meetings in this way is that the parish council has been able to share documents such that everyone in the meeting (Councillors, Clerk and Public) can see them at the same.

This has proved useful, particularly for planning applications, and the Council would like to be able to continue to share documents in this way once it returns to physical meetings at the MSC.

Currently, however, the MSC does not have internet connectivity which would facilitate access to documents held on shared or cloud drives, and the Parish Council would like to explore how it can work with MSC bring this about, possibly through a grant to cover some or all of the cost of installation of wi-fi and any additional audio visual equipment to support public meetings (for example, wall mounted wide screen tv's and speakers, which could connect either remotely or through HDMI cables to a laptop).

A number of advantages to exploring this proposal have been identified in initial discussions with the Chair of the MSC committee, which include:

- Improved ICT and audio-visual could attract more business through hire of meeting rooms
- Some fitness classes could be offered with remote instructors (for example, Peloton, Les Mills)
- Improved connectivity could help support the role of the Parish Council and Social Centre in responding to emergency situations (the MSC is designated as an Emergency Rest Centre) and offering a more integrated working arrangement with principle authorities, public health and other statutory organisations.
- The Parish Council could move to a larger room within the Social Centre for its meetings, becoming more accessible to a wider audience.

The Parish Council has previously supported the MSC in its modernisation of the kitchen through a grant of £6,000.

The Parish Council has powers to support the MSC in this way under s.19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946, which empowers a local council to contribute by way of grant or loan toward the expenses incurred or to be incurred by any voluntary organisation in providing recreational facilities.

Action:

That the Council consider whether to explore further how it can help MSC to improve its ICT connectivity.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
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