

East Harptree Nursery Preschool and Forest School and East Harptree Theatre Committee

Joint Application to East Harptree Parish Council for a grant from Community Infrastructure Levy funds - £10,000

1. Overview

This joint application is seeking funding for a refurbishment project in the Village Hall to increase the reach and scope of childcare provision (including a new baby care facility) in a rural area, to provide greater flexibility for local working families and to help to secure the future maintenance of the Village Hall which we believe is an important part of the village infrastructure.

East Harptree Nursery Preschool and Forest School ("The Preschool") is a registered charity (number 1029276) running a thriving setting currently rated by Ofsted as "Good". It is the main feeder setting for East Harptree Primary School and the relationship between the Preschool and the local nearby Primary School is very good.

The Preschool currently rents 658sq ft of space in East Harptree Village Hall ("the Hall") but has the opportunity of taking a larger space of c2,000sq ft which has recently been vacated by the local Village Club. The Village Club had been a tenant of the Hall for c 35 years but ceased trading due to dwindling numbers and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Preschool currently have a headcount of 36 children with the average child attending 20 hours per week across 5 days. The space they currently rent restricts the number of children that can attend each day and the space that has now become available will allow them to relocate their activities downstairs, offer more spaces (up to circa 55 spaces) to a wider variety of ages and provide accessibility to children with mobility issues.

The Preschool also intend to introduce care for babies and toddlers (which they cannot currently offer) to provide significantly greater flexibility for parents in the local area.

The Hall where the Preschool are based was originally constructed c1889 and has been used for various activities prior to becoming the Village Hall and a registered charity under a conveyance dated 25 July 1949 (registered charity number 304536).

The Hall currently rents space to the East Harptree Community Shop, Solo Hairdressers and the Preschool. The venue is also utilised by East Harptree Village School for PE lessons and school productions and by various other community groups including a circuits fitness class, Yoga, children's dance classes, the local Women's Institute and the Parish Council. A thriving and growing Preschool is a very important foundation for the ongoing maintenance and improvement of this very important village asset.



Planning permission has been obtained for the change of use of the vacated space and we are now working in partnership to bring this project to life and to fund £100,000 of improvements. We are

therefore seeking a grant of £10,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy funds to help us to deliver this project alongside funding being provided from the reserves of both charities.

2. Planned budget and timing

The indicative planned budget is set out below:

	£	Notes
Architect Fees	3,000	Already funded
Planning	3,000	Already funded
Site clearance	7,500	
Partitioning/walls	7,000	
Ceiling	7,000	
Flooring	7,500	
Heating	6,000	
Power and lighting	10,000	
External Doors	6,000	
Internal Doors	2,000	
Building works	8,000	
Wall finishes	15,000	
Toilets	5,000	
Kitchen	8,000	
Furniture	5,000	
Total	100,000	

Quotes for works have been obtained from three potential contractors and one has been selected on the basis of both experience and cost to work with the Committee for the Hall and the Preschool to finalise the plans and schedule for the works.

Key target dates for the project are as set out below:

Activity	Target date
Finalise Design	30 November 2021
Building regulations and Ofsted reviews	31 January 2022
Construction	February 2022 – June 2022
Opening for business	1 September 2022

3. Fundraising

The funds for the project are targeted from the following sources:

	£	Confirmed £	In progress £
Hall reserves	22,000	22,000	
Preschool reserves	22,000	22,000	
Private Loan to Preschool	22,000	22,000	
Funding bodies	20,000		20,000
Community Infrastructure Levy	10,000		10,000
Local Appeal	4,000		4,000
Total	100,000	66,000	34,000

The reserves committed from the Hall and the Preschool have been accumulated over several years and are considered to be affordable from an investment perspective in the context of the requirements for ongoing operating costs in the running of the Preschool and the maintenance schedule for the Hall.

The private loan to the Preschool has been committed on a matching basis, will be interest free and will be repayable over 10 years. To assist with the repayment of this loan the new ten-year lease agreement between the Preschool and the Hall will include a provision for the rent of £9,500 per annum to be fixed for a period of five years.

We are in the process of submitting an application to the Garfield Weston Foundation and The Bernard Sunley Trust (amongst others) and are also confident that we will be able to raise funds through a local appeal to parents of current and former pupils of the Preschool, a number of whom are still living and working in the Village and surrounding area.

4. Main Proposal - The Project

4.1 The need for improved facilities and increased capacity for the Preschool

East Harptree village is growing with the construction of a number of new houses in recent years which is in turn increasing the demand from young families for nursery and preschool spaces.

In its recent (October 2021) publication “Women in the labour market – boosting mothers’ employment and earnings through accessible childcare” the Centre for Progressive Policy notes that;

“the childcare system can play a powerful role in supporting women in the labour market. There is a strong link between the availability of childcare and women’s employment at the local level.....New survey evidence reveals that , among mother’s across the UK, 46% claimed that they had “struggled to find suitable childcare”. Among those who reported struggling with access to childcare it was found that:

- *46% were prevented from taking on more hours at work (equating to 1.7million women)*
- *34% were prevented from taking a potential job (equating to 1.3 million women)*
- *30% had to reduce the hours that they worked (equating to 1.1 million women)*
- *15% had to quit their job (equating to 560,000 women)*

.....New analysis estimates that if women had access to adequate childcare services and were able to work the hours they wanted, they would increase their earnings by between £7.6bn and £10.9bn per annum. This represents only the short-term gains of tackling under employment. Greater economic gains would be realised through providing women with greater control over their working lives, expanding career opportunities and stimulating demand.

.....The country cannot afford not to invest in an accessible, affordable, flexible, and high quality childcare system that meets the needs of working mothers and their families.”

In the local area some parents are already choosing other settings so siblings including babies can all attend one setting. It is estimated that the Preschool will become unviable within 5 years if the provision does not keep up with the competition and offer a more flexible and wider ranging service. The potential impact on the village (including the Hall) could be significant if this were to happen and has already been seen in many small villages. The lack of pupils feeding through to small village primary schools has led to numbers rapidly dwindling. Small schools are already under threat in

these challenging economic times with Local Authorities finding it hard to justify the, often large, cost per pupil to keep them open. The additional stress from the impact of the measures taken during the pandemic can only worsen the situation in the near term.

From an accessibility perspective the fact that the Preschool is currently situated on the first floor of the building means that it is difficult if not impossible to accommodate any children with accessibility issues. Moving the setting to the ground floor would remove this restriction on entry.

The Preschool has been consistently rated as “Good” over many years but the management team and Trustees are very keen to target an “Outstanding” rating and having a more bespoke setting and facilities will help them in their work to achieve this.

4.2 The impact of the Preschool on the Village and local area

The Preschool has been in the village since the 1980s and has provided early years learning, care and development opportunities for hundreds of local children – close to 1,000 over the last 30 years.

The headcount is currently 36 with the average child attending 20 hours per week across 5 days

A large percentage of these children have progressed through to the Primary School and then on to Chew Valley Comprehensive School.

In addition the Preschool has provided employment for a number of local people over the last 30 years. There are currently 10 employees and this number will increase with the additional child numbers that will be targeted in the new space combined with the extended opening hours.

The Preschool’s position as a longstanding and reliable tenant of the Hall is also very important as it enables the Management Committee of the Hall to continue to plan ahead with confidence to maintain the Hall building for the benefit of the wider community.

With the increasing number of young families in the village and surrounding areas and the changing work environment there is an opportunity for the Preschool to help support those families and particularly mothers within those families.

4.3 Leadership and management

Jessica Sheldon is the manager of the Preschool having taken over the leadership role in 2018. She is young, enthusiastic and a quick learner with a great understanding for the differing needs of the children she has charge of. From a governance perspective she reports to and is supported by a strong group of Trustees who are all based locally in East Harptree.

Angela Harper has huge experience in the education sector having been a headmistress of a senior school for a number of years. Gill Hickling also has significant experience in the education sector and currently works closely with schools in the area and liaises regularly with Ofsted.

Victoria Walker has children in the Preschool and takes responsibility for fundraising.

The move of the Preschool to the larger space will be a significant boost for Jessica and her team and give them a foundation to ensure that the services of the Preschool can be further developed and expanded, the numbers of children (and babies) can be increased and an “Outstanding” Ofsted rating can be realistically targeted.

The Management Committee of the Hall have been impressed by Jess’s enthusiasm since she took over in 2019. Whilst she is young and has a lot to learn she understands that and the the Village should be doing all it can to support young people like her.

4.4 Ongoing maintenance obligations

The Hall has been an important building in the village since it was transferred in 1949. It depends on rental income and Hall hire fees to fund ongoing upkeep and maintenance. The Committee are all volunteers but costs are incurred for running the building including cleaning, health and safety and ongoing maintenance and improvements.

The investment in the ground floor space will deliver a return in the form of a ten-year lease which is being put in place between the Hall and the Preschool to clearly set out responsibilities on both sides for the property. The annual rental paid by the Village Club (£3,000) had not changed for a number of years due to affordability and that part of the building has become run down and in need of investment. This project provides an opportunity to make that investment for the benefit of the building over the coming years. The Preschool will pay rent of £9,500 per annum increasing in line with CPIH from 2027.

The increased rental from the Preschool will also enable the Hall to consider the options for the space on the first floor that will be vacated whilst at the same time a wider plan is being drawn up for other maintenance works which are planned to take place over the coming years – further details on this can be supplied if required.

Options for the space on the first floor could include an office for a local business or potentially a hotdesking workspace for local villagers (with toilet and kitchen facilities available) if an appropriate business model could be put together. The Hall Committee are open to any ideas that people may have and will be looking to engage with the community on this in due course.

4.5 Community support

It was a sad day when the Village Club closed in August 2020 mainly as a result of the ongoing impact of the Covid pandemic but this also represented an opportunity for the Hall Committee to explore other potential uses of the space in the Hall.

The space was advertised and there were initially three potentially interested parties in the form of:

- a. The Preschool
- b. Coffee Shop proprietors (The Hub and the EH Village Shop)
- c. Former proprietor of the Crown in West Harptree

The former proprietor of the Crown fell away fairly early on in the process but the other parties both submitted proposals to the Hall Committee and a number of discussions took place between representatives of the Hall Committee (there are 15 local organisations represented on it by volunteers) and members of the wider community. The Parish Council were also present on a Skype call on 21 October 2021 at which the pros and cons of the two options were discussed and considered.

A final decision on the way forward was taken in February 2021 when the Management Committee of the Hall voted to support the Preschool application whilst at the same time accommodating an improved space allocation for the Village Shop. That decision was then communicated to the community via social media and the Preschool have had a positive response from parents and families regarding the increased scope of services and the extended hours.

Since February the key focus has been on working in partnership to obtain planning permission for change of use and carrying out several surveys before appointing Architects in July/August 2021 to finalise the plans. We have also been working closely with the Village Shop to ensure that their

needs can also be accommodated as part of this project. They have been very supportive throughout the process.

5. Conclusion and further information

Firstly thank you for considering this application. We believe this project can have a significant impact on a number of levels and represents an investment in the infrastructure of the village in all of the following areas:

- The Hall (and thereby all its tenants and users)
- The Preschool (and thereby children and families in the village)
- The Village Shop
- The Community more broadly

We hope that you are able to support this request.

For further information please initially contact Graham Harding (Trustee of the Village Hall and Treasurer of the Joint Management Committee for the Hall and the Playing Field).

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