

Update on behalf of the Trustees of The Hut and the Trustees of the Reading Room

When I wrote my update last month, the news then was that there will be no new surgery at the Hut but that there remained a chance that we might see a new village hall emerge at either the Hut or the Reading Room site, funded by a partial disposal of land for housing development.

The news this month is that the Hut trustees have concluded that they do not have the resources to do anything at all with the Hut. They have therefore determined that the interests of the village are best served by them passing control of the property to the trustees of the Reading Room, who do have funds with which to explore potential redevelopment options.

Quite what those options might be remains to be decided. Any redevelopment will need the usual Planning consents and, under Charity Commission rules, requires prior consultation with the village. The Reading Room trustees are not ready to commence this process.

All that is proposed now is an orderly 'hand-over' of the Hut to the Reading Room. To make that happen, the Hut trustees have first to put their affairs in order. The last Annual General Meeting of the Hut was held on 12 April 2016 and so far no reports and accounts for any of the years ending 31 December 2016 to 2020 have been presented to the village. You will find elsewhere in this magazine a formal notice of AGM from the current Hut trustees for a meeting to be held at the Reading Room on Tuesday, 23 November 2021 at which it is proposed:

- (i) to correct these omissions, and
- (ii) on the conclusion of the AGM, for all the existing trustees to retire as trustees of the Hut and for Westcott Village Hall Trust CIO (the formal name of the Reading Room as registered with the Charities Commission) to take over as the sole corporate trustee of the Hut.

All residents of Westcott and its surrounding area aged 18 and over are entitled to be present and to vote at the forthcoming AGM. You are welcome to attend, though the business of this meeting will be purely procedural. Copies of the outstanding reports and accounts to be presented at the AGM may be viewed at www.westcottvillagehall.com and may be obtained in hard copy from Glenn Wylie, the current chairman of the Hut by emailing hutwestcott@gmail.com. The website also hosts a copy of the Hut's constitution.

Assuming the Hut AGM proceeds as planned, the Reading Room trustees are planning early in the new year to consult with the village over a further technical reorganisation. I will report in more detail later, but (briefly) that will involve bringing the terms of the trusts on which the land at the Reading Room and the land at the Hut are held onto the same footing and to permit the Hut to be managed on the same terms as apply to the Reading Room, which (as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, or CIO) benefits from a modern form of constitution.

Bernd Ratzke
Chairman, Joint Working Party
8 October 2021