

## **Hawkhurst Community Hall Questionnaire Replies 2018: Question 5** ***“If Hawkhurst had a new community hall what facilities would you like it to be able to offer?”***

Many respondents took the time to answer this question, with a wide range of excellent suggestions. It is abundantly clear there is a pent-up demand for a new hall; indeed, what came through strongly was the desire for a village meeting space, “somewhere that will become the centre of the village”. Clearly we are looking at a **community CENTRE**, not just a community hall, and that should shape our thinking and planning.

As Hawkhurst grows, with more new housing an inevitability, the importance of such a community centre cannot be overstated. Our village will see new people coming here to make Hawkhurst their home, the place where they will bring up their families and want to stay. Successful integration of newcomers with those who have been here for many years will make the difference between a motley collection of streets and districts, and a friendly, welcoming, successful village where people are happy to put down roots. A place where young and old, long-term residents and newcomers can meet – whether for a coffee and chat or to share a common interest or activity – will be a key part of this process of integration. Build the right community centre and they will come ...

### **A “Shared Space”**

There were several recommendations that the community centre could be part of a shared space (either in the actual centre or at least close by). In this space could be a medical centre, the Parish Council office, the library, village archives, an advice centre, tourist information. Putting this concept together with the community centre, it is starting to look as though we could have some kind of “**Hawkhurst Hub**”.

### **Potential Users: Individuals**

Many respondents want to see activities for young families, babies and young children (pre-school play groups and crèche, junior gardening, arts classes for children). Homework clubs, youth clubs and an area for teens to hang out were also requested. Several people would welcome a meeting place for the elderly, also seniors’ lunches and activities such as dancing. Although no specific requests for working age adults were made, adult education classes and evening activities such as arts and exercise classes would clearly appeal.

Residents with a disability of some kind will be catered for, whether by the installation of a loop system to assist hearing, disabled access, specialised exercise classes or having an Autism Aware “quiet café” once a week.

### **Potential Users: Groups and Events**

Having a large hall that can be adapted to suit various purposes – and sufficient kitchen/catering facilities – will enable a wide range of possible groups and organisations to be accommodated. These could include: the U3A (University of the Third Age), yoga classes, adult education, flower shows, drama groups, choirs and so on. Importantly, income could also be generated through the commercial hire of such a hall for events such as children’s parties, farmers’ markets, jumble sales, wedding receptions and functions of all kinds.

One or more smaller meeting rooms could be hired out on an occasional basis to local businesses or individuals. There could be a drop-in centre for the CAB, housing/benefits advice, an ethical banking adviser. Smaller rooms could also be used for U3A or club meetings. Good internet connectivity and some computers would, of course, be essential.

### **Types of Activity: Sports and Exercise**

Hawkhurst residents love their sports and all kinds of physical activity! Both indoor and outdoor facilities and classes would be welcomed. A large multi-purpose hall could accommodate dance and exercise classes, keep fit, Tai Chi, netball, Pilates, yoga, Zumba and volleyball – to name just some.

Some activities would require outside space, for example health walks, a mixed use games area and football. Other hoped-for facilities would call for more inside space and/or larger sums of money – for example a climbing wall, a proper gymnasium, ten pin bowling, a swimming pool and spa.

### **Types of Activity: Arts-related**

Local people are also into the arts of all kinds, and would like to see a new community centre hosting arts and crafts classes for children and adults; craft shows; photography including exhibitions; musical recitals; a community choir; drama and shows.

### **Education and Clubs**

A community centre could offer the ideal venue for all types of educational activities, with a particular demand for adult education, both day and evening. Practical classes in subjects such as cookery, first aid, dog training, IT training or digital photography would also be welcomed. Space for some of the U3A interest groups would be useful.

Clubs and groups of all sorts could use the community centre as their base: the bridge club, local history group, the WI, business networking groups and social groups of all kinds. Other creative suggestions included: an intergenerational skills swaps club; apprentice workshops; debating clubs; Christmas wreath making; a village forest school with a vegetable patch to feed those in need.

### **Kitchen and Café/Restaurant; Toilets**

Catering facilities are seen as essential to the success of the community centre, which should be able to offer most things from a cup of coffee to a lunch or a wedding reception. A frequent request was for somewhere to meet people for a chat, a place to drop into informally and have a hot drink. If the community centre is to be seen as a good venue to hire for a party or other large social event, it must be able to provide catering facilities of a high standard, including a bar. Other suggestions under this heading were: a social enterprise café, a soup kitchen and a regular Autism Aware “quiet café”.

Sufficient toilets are, of course, essential.

### **Parking**

Most respondents specifically stated that there must be adequate parking beside the community centre.

### **Outline List of Requirements for a New Community Centre**

Taking into account all of the above, the following would appear to be the outline requirements for a new community centre and its associated space:

- Bright, attractive, flexible areas, perhaps with partitioning
- A large hall
- A smaller hall and/or meeting rooms
- Suitable flooring for activities including dancing and exercise
- Kitchen and café/restaurant, with bar, and with comfortable seating for a café area
- Storage – for chairs (enough for large meetings), tables, bridge tables, some sports equipment (eg mats for exercise classes), display boards, dismantable staging, catering supplies.
- Internet, phones and computers
- Lighting for stage
- Sound/audio system, including hearing aid loops
- Projection system
- Soundproofing between rooms
- Toilets

- Outside space – outside café and games area
- Parking

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