

LITTLE MILTON VILLAGE PLAN

VILLAGE SURVEY RESULTS 2013

RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

A survey of all households in the village was conducted Feb-Apr 2013. The purpose of the survey was to seek the views of villagers on matters which had been identified as being of concern in the village, and also to ask key questions on behalf of various village organisations – parish council, village hall, shop, etc.

We circulated a tailored extract of the results to various village organisations and asked for their feedback before final publication. The responses received are as follows.

PARISH COUNCIL

Thank you for forwarding the report containing responses to the questions requested by the Parish Council.

Response rates

The Council is pleased that a high response rate was achieved, and thanks the Group for the hard work that went into designing the questionnaire, circulating it to all households, collecting responses and carrying out the analysis.

The high response rates achieved can give all parties the confidence that the views expressed are representative of the whole village.

Demographic Information

This information is very interesting and highlights, in particular, the fact that the village has an older population than average.

It appears that over half the village population is aged 45 or above, although the number aged 75 plus is not as high as might be expected.

In publishing this data in its final form, it might be interesting to see how the demographic curve for Little Milton compares with national averages, and also any data available on other rural communities.

Website

The development of the website is an on-going process, but clearly a little more publicity as to its existence would do no harm. That said, the Council has been advised that 'hit rate' for the site is good, indicating that it is well used.

Newsletter

The newsletter is an important means of communication within the village, is well-read and, from the survey results, clearly needs to stay in paper format if it is to continue to reach the majority of the village.

The desires of some people as to content have been reviewed. The Council feels that the newsletter should be just that – and not a newspaper. In its current format, the printing costs are covered by advertising revenue. 56 pages is the realistic limit for size, and the current content usually now uses all the pages available. The Council is happy with the scope of content as it is now.

Some of the information requested might usefully be put on the village website. In addition, some points have been noted as possibilities for inclusion in the newsletter in the future.

Awareness of Parish Council business

The Council is pleased that the majority of respondents know who are the councillors and clerk, are aware of the dates of meetings, and read the summary of the minutes in the newsletter. Those who wish to see the full minutes can do so on the website.

Parish Council responsibilities

Whilst the majority seem to be content with the way the Council is discharging its responsibilities, it is noted that maintenance of the village green and the annual litter blitz received a few more adverse comments.

The Council is currently reviewing the best way to delineate the edges of the village green to avoid damage by lorries, and hopes thereby to improve the appearance of the green.

The Council will consider whether or not to carry out additional litter blitzes. Success depends very much on volunteers coming forward. The last blitz was carried out by a small team numbering just four!

We are in active dialogue with our PCSO about traffic speed checks within the village. Our new PCSO was not trained in the use of the equipment and we await the completion of his training. It is understood that volunteers have now come forward to help the police and that Mrs Julie Harrison has offered to co-ordinate the effort.

Services provided by other authorities

The Council notes dissatisfaction with Thames Water and Trading Standards. An important meeting was held earlier this year with representatives of Thames Water, OCC, SODC and the Environment Agency to agree an agenda of work to be carried out on drains and sewers in the village. Progress has been made, work is continuing, and it is hoped that the village will see improvements.

The Trading Standards Weight Limit Enforcement, or lack of it, applies almost entirely to

the Haseley Road. It is understood that a number of volunteers have now come forward to assist with the self-help monitoring process, and that Mrs Kate Daunt has offered to lead this project.

Footpaths

The fact that the footpaths around the village, particularly those on BBOWT land, appear to be well utilised is welcome news.

Housing

The survey results regarding housing are very useful. The Parish Council is considering drafting a Housing Policy for the village, and the views of the villagers will help inform this process.

Summary

The Parish Council looks forward to receiving the full results of the survey once analysis is complete. Meanwhile the feedback received has been helpful in highlighting some suggestions which the Parish Council can follow up in the near future.

VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

There were a lot of helpful comments in the replies to the Little Milton Village Survey, and this is a response to them from the Management Committee. The first section is about comments related to the Village Hall fabric and facilities; the second section is about suggested activities and events. Some topics attracted more than one comment – these have been grouped together before the relevant section.

Section 1 – Comments on the Hall Itself.

1.1 Lighting inside the Hall

There were seven comments about this:

'Improve lighting for sales/craft events'

'Improve lighting so that activities such as craft sessions would be adequately lit'

'Lighting not so good for close work'

'Improve lighting – needs to create "moods"'

'Lighting +heating need improvement. Both are inadequate for use x2'

'Lighting is poor'.

'Acoustic and lighting is poor'

This is something that can be solved and the committee have been looking at this issue for some time. LED lights were an idea, as very cheap to run and maintenance-free, but lacked intensity and the best solution seems to be suspended fluorescent lights. Modern lights are available in warmer colours than traditional fluorescents. The cost is not massive, energy efficiency is much better than incandescent bulbs and the committee intend to install these. These will be on a separate switch – the comment about lighting moods is a good one – high light levels will not suit all people or all activities.

1.2 Heating and Ventilation.

'Heating applied before events (I know of at least one occasion where someone would not rebook due to this)'

'There is a need to provide ventilation during well attended events. A problem of condensation occurs on the cold floor surface—dangerous!!'

'Air conditioning'

'It could be a bit warmer'

Ventilation – the committee is aware that this is a problem and is looking at several options to address this issue. This is particularly the case as condensation can cause problems with the fire alarm sensor. The full air-conditioning route is beyond our reach in cost terms – it would cost more or less all the funds we have. The second best solution is a means of extracting hot and humid air from the building. The main problem area is the top of the main hall, and unfortunately there is no loft space in which to locate extraction fans. Two possible remaining solutions are remote control or humidity controlled Velux windows high in the roof, or some type of extractor fan system, again fairly high up.

The present heating system has the benefit that it is quiet and easily used by hirers, but we are aware that in the winter it can take some time to heat the space adequately. Simple solutions are to turn the heating on a bit in advance or add yet more heating capacity. A one week programmable timer would allow this to be scheduled in advance, but these are generally a fiddle to use and are more likely to cause problems than solve them.

1.3 Acoustics

'Acoustic damping would improve any musical event.'

'Acoustics'

'Something to dampen the noise eg thicker curtains - it is echoey'

'Sound is not good especially when groups are small. Also cinema sound is poor.'

'Acoustic and lighting is poor. Acoustic clouds would help.'

Quite a lot of people noted the poor acoustics in the hall. The hall acoustics are good for music but less suitable for speech. The primary cause of this is very likely to be a long reverberation time, and the standard solution is either acoustic panels or acoustic blinds. The question is really one of how effective these would be in relation to the cost of fitting them and any possible disadvantages in terms of how they look. Blinds could be on rollers and panels could be detachable, although storage would be a problem for detachable panels.

1.4 Stage

'Stage blocks to create temporary stage'

'Maybe a temporary stage'

'Removable stage'

The only problem is storage – the storage room in the hall is already packed. A stage has been discussed in the past but a permanent structure would take up too much space and restrict the use of the hall. There is, at present no storage available in which to keep a temporary stage.

1.5 Patio

'Paved area at rear of hall'

'Patio area at rear'

'Area for smokers etc – covered area'

'Covered area at rear'

'Integrate with shop.'

'No view'

The view to the West is good, and in many cases people (not just smokers) do like to step outside into something other than a car park. Also, for a noise point of view, it's much better that the West doors are opened than the East ones. Right now, they step straight onto grass, which causes problems when wet. Would non-smokers be prepared to share a patio with smokers? People can be quite touchy these days. Maybe a smoking end and non-smoking end.

This is an interesting idea, but the Pine Lodge Committee is not responsible for the outside area around the building and so ideas such as a patio, smokers' area and a delineated parking plan need to be referred to the Parish Council.

Really integrating with the Shop would be very difficult, as the Shop and Village Hall are totally separate organisations, and the Village Hall is a registered charity. However,

a single patio along the back of the building would bring the two parts of the building together. This is something the Parish Council might consider.

1.6 Look and Feel

'It's too institutional in its look and feel and that yellow interior decor is awful. There's nothing welcoming or comfortable about the interior'

'Too bland.'

Décor – the colours used in the hall were carefully thought out and chosen specifically to be neutral so that hirers could add their own decorations for parties, weddings etc. A change can be considered when the next major repainting is due. A lot of people, on first seeing the hall, do seem to quite like the look of it

1.7 Marquee

'Get a big marquee for events outside'

When marquees are required hirers have always provided their own with permission of the Parish Council. As for the stage, storage would make it difficult for the Village Hall to own its own marquee.

1.8 Name

'Change the name "Pine Lodge" is horrible=Village Hall'

Fair point – in many cases saying an event, for example, is at Little Milton Village Hall is simpler and clearer than saying it's at the Pine Lodge. However, the name "Pine Lodge" was chosen by the village in response to a questionnaire that was sent to every household when the hall was nearing completion.

1.9 Other Uses

'Allow the school to use it for indoor sports'

School indoor sports – from the outset the hall was not designed as a gym and is unsuited for this purpose. This will be even more the case with the suspended improved lighting.

1.10 Partitioning

'Temporary partition to allow more than one activity to happen at once'

Partition – the hall is too high for a partition to be effective and we again come to the problem of storage.

1.11 Parking

'Overflow car parking for events could be better managed on field'

Hard to mark a field, and the field in any case belongs to the Parish Council. Maybe a suggested parking plan could be prepared, and issued to hirers. Better indications of where the overflow parking is might help – sign attached to the gate is not totally satisfactory. Maybe sign attach to large cone, or cones + tapes to direct incoming cars. The problem with all this is that it relies on the hirers to carry out requests, and that does not always happen. Still, we can make request.

Section 2 – Comments on Activities in the Hall.

1.1 Youth Activities

‘Provision for children & teenagers e.g. Youth club’.

Children /youth club – we already provide a holiday film club and there are children’s craft days and Kindergym. There was an open evening to promote a youth club but there was no response from the village.

1.2 Adult Education

Adult education classes – we have provided dance classes in the past and at present Zumba and Yoga are available. Anyone wanting to hold classes can contact Oxfordshire Adult Education who may be able to provide a tutor if there is sufficient interest. Anyone in the village who would like to teach a class is welcome to get in touch with the Village Hall Management Committee and we will do our best to support them

In terms of topics for local adult education, the most popular items were:

Languages	29
Crafts	16
Art	14
Computer	7
Music	5
Dancing	5
Yoga or Pilates	5

A craft club has started lately, and attendance has been good, which suggests that real demand exists. A yoga group also exists and does well. Languages would be very possible, if we can find a good local teacher. The survey does suggest that village has a wealth of talent awaiting the call, and the committee is keen to support anyone who comes forward.

1.3 Activities.

Those with 20+ votes were:

Choir, Book club, Village Picnic, Charity Jumble Sale/Freecycle, Bingo, Village family sports day, outdoor concert and Barn Dance.

Actually, some of these have been tried in the past (not that means they cannot be tried again). The late Summer concert and picnic was an annual event, but was dogged by bad weather and poor support. Similarly, we can organise a barn dance – there are some excellent Ceilidh bands through GoodNightOut, but our one previous attempt lost money. The many issues around safety probably preclude a village sports day or 10K. Race Night: yes, one was run, it made money, but attendance was sparse (and the committee ended up with significantly lighter wallets).

However, the Entertainments Committee will review all of these suggestions and do its best. A Murder Mystery is scheduled for October as a new type of event. As so often is the case, any volunteers coming forward to organise new activities are very much encouraged.

SHOP COMMITTEE

Receiving the feedback that 92% of Villager’s value the services of the Shop and Post Office is heartening for all those involved with the village shop, particularly the staff and volunteers. The survey has also helped the management and committee plan for the future.

One of the more common suggestions was to extend the Stores opening hours specifically during Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. We would like to extend the opening hours over the weekends but with the relatively small team of volunteer it is not possible to cover these ‘unsocial’ hours and at present do not have the funds to employ a person.

The store is extremely fortunate to have such a lovely outlook when seated in the patio area. Over the coming months we will be evaluating the possibility of providing a cover or wind protection for this area in order that it can be utilised on the more inclement days.

The products and services the Store offers were generally acceptable to the majority of the villagers but there were suggestions to extend the offering in certain areas.

Suggested additional Service	Comments
Newspapers and Oxford Mail	This is an area we are currently exploring with suppliers.
Cigarettes	A selection of cigarettes and tobacco are sold in the shop. Please ask the staff at the counter.
Provide fresh fruit and vegetables	Over the summer the shop has provided fresh fruit and vegetables but unfortunately the demand was not sufficient to maintain the lines as a viable service but this will be kept under review.
Clearer recommendations on wines and food	Good point. Something we will take on board over the coming months.

Electric meter top up service	This is available at the Post Office
Cash Back service for Nat West	Cash withdrawals for the majority of the banks including the Nat West can be made at the Post Office
Car Tax	The services our category of Post Office can provide is decided by the Central Post Office. Unfortunately we are not allowed to offer Car Tax renewal facility.
Lottery	The store would have to commit to open until 7.00pm on a Saturday. This is something we are unable to do with the small number of volunteers we have
Provide more basic foods at realistic prices including frozen vegetables	We will explore the viability of stocking lines in this category but are now featuring "lower price" items.
Drop off/collection point for household delivery services	Unfortunately we simply do not have the space in the Store to provide this service

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

It is clear that many people believe the Church is an important part of our village. The challenge we face is similar to other groups in this village in that we need more active members, willing to help with the running and outreach into our community. The Questionnaire response will help us understand people's needs better so we can explore ways to help them.