

**Supporting the Creation of a Community Café
An opportunity to think differently?**

- The Town Council has an opportunity in the letting of the pavilion café to do ‘more of the same’ or to think in a more creative, innovative and ‘community focussed’ way about how we use the Pavilion café as a Community Asset.
- There are many examples both locally and nationally of how Community Cafes have been developed in partnership between local authorities and local Voluntary Organisations, Community Interest Companies and Community Groups.
- We already have local organisations and groups testing the ‘Community Café’ waters in Woodbridge (Poppy’s Pantry with St Marys Church and St Johns Church. Both providing cafes one morning a week in the town, both are attracting interest in the town. There are also positive examples In Ipswich, Saxmundham and Lowestoft.
- Kingston Field is used regularly by families, local sports groups and local people generally. And the café has already proved itself to be a popular resource with local people who have expressed disappointment with its recent closure.

I believe the question we should be asking ourselves is does the opportunity of re-leasing this local café give us the opportunity to work with other organisations to show that the Woodbridge Town Council is actively looking for different ways of working with our local Communities and is interested in supporting an initiative which will build community support and resilience with local people and potentially harder to reach groups locally.

Recent History

1. The lease for the pavilion café has become available (? When?) following previous tenant giving notice (? reason why)
2. Debt to council of circa £2k agreed by council to be written off
3. Utility bills for building still under dispute between council and previous tenant
4. Previous tenant sublet changing areas to Tennis Club (TC).
5. Future arrangement for rental of changing areas is likely to be a direct arrangement between TC and Woodbridge Town Council (WTC) (info as per town clerk offered on 28/05/19)
6. Rent for pavilion circa £8k per year (tenant responsible for repairs.)
7. As I understand it the Town Clerk was tasked with exploring future options/tenants for the leasing of the pavilion

Options to re the future leasing of the pavilion cafe

Option 1- Competitive tender to local business.

1. Competitive tender for lease of pavilion building as café- clerk has indicated very positive interest locally in taking pavilion over.
2. Early leasing of the pavilion would mean that local people would possibly have a café open during the summer months (depending tendering and subsequent legal process)
3. Pavilion would not be left un-used for any longer than necessary
4. Any loss of income from the pavilion can be limited

Option 2 Set up a process to attract a local charity/community project/community Interest Company to work with WTC in partnership to create a local community café in the pavilion on Kingston Field.

1. In the spirit of creating a new style of working with the Woodbridge community locally I would like to propose that we consider an alternative type of tender by looking for expressions of interest from local Voluntary groups/organisations, Community Interest Companies, community inclusion groups to create a **Community Café**.
2. To help understand any potential interest and help from local organisations in the development of a Community Cafe I have made contact with; _
The Communities team at East Suffolk
Realise Futures
Leading Lives
Community Action Suffolk

Additional Information

There are several examples of community cafes in Suffolk already including one provided in partnership between St Marys church and Realise Futures (one morning a week) and another at St Johns Church (one morning a week. Other permanent examples include:-

Taste Café run by volunteers in partnership with local churches
<https://www.mie.org.uk/cafe/>

Rural Coffee Caravan – not a building but a great concept
<http://ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk/>

Saxmundham- local church and café working together

<https://networksuffolk.org.uk/2018/01/new-look-saxmundham-high-street-cafe/>

Ipswich Waterfront Very popular community café

<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/la-tour-cafe-re-opens-in-ipswich-1-5551204>

Umbrella organisations and supporting information relating to setting up a successful community cafe

<http://www.beanbagcafe.co.uk/>

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/help-centre/resources/getting-started/tips-community-cafes/>

https://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/PTC_Cafes_A5_AW-1.pdf

What are we being asked to achieve locally with communities?

There has been much interest over recent years by local authorities to support initiatives which support local communities, voluntary organisations, community interest companies to create local community resources which specifically support harder to reach groups and funding is made available to help such projects in East Suffolk Via the communities teams, information re East Suffolk's to community development can be found here.

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/>

It is also recognised the importance how the success of any community project can be measured, the link below gives an example of how it's possible for organisations to confirm Social Impact and therefore that the investment made by funders is worth making. This is also possibly also a useful introduction into helping WTC thinking about how we measure success of any future projects like the Jetty Lane, Whisstocks building etc or indeed the development of the neighbourhood or town plan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSgGsFGCKVY>

Finally a guidance document to support the way in which National Government expects local authorities to work alongside its locally communities to deliver community based opportunities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-strategy-building-a-future-that-works-for-everyone/2-places-empowerment-and-investment-for-local-communities>

In Summary

Creating a successful Community café cannot be the responsibility of a local authority. Facilitating the development of such a project is, in my view, very much the responsibility of a local authority. It is highly likely that the process for doing so might take longer than going out to local business, but East Suffolk and Community Action Suffolk would be able to help us with promoting the opportunity to local organisations who might be interested. This might mean in the short term we look for a short term lease holder to take on the building to avoid loss of rental or perhaps offer the space to local organisations already running café /drop in type opportunities locally.

There are several commercial cafes in Woodbridge, the Tea Hut and The Station House are close to the Pavilion and as a commercial venture the pavilion would have to make a profit – a community venture may be able to source funding from alternate areas which might reduce the pressure on it to be profit making.

The longer term benefits of working with a 'not for profit' organisation are likely to mean a better outcome for local people, not just in terms of reasonably priced café, in a lovely setting but also in relation to meeting the needs of harder to reach people like family carers, people with dementia it also has the potential to offer employment and volunteering opportunities to harder to reach groups as well as promote a local community group.

Councillor Sharon Miller

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