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Agenda Item 4 – Village Hall, Production of Legal Documents

Please try to read the following statement before any decision is made by the council.

Chair,

Clearly, the future of the Village Hall [VH] has been a challenging issue for this parish and I commend the council for trying to resolve it and secure its future. I am heartened to see that members of this community have constituted a new charity; and although I couldn't find its constitution, I believe its primary purpose is to manage the hall and promote its use. I am also pleased to see that the hall has been registered as a community asset, which should help towards its future.

We are all aware that the previous council took a different position to the Playing Fields Committee [PFC] and this council regarding the responsibility for the hall. So, I took it upon myself, using my legal background, to investigate.... purely to educate and place myself in a position where I can help as much as I can.

My research has identified the following – based on documents that cannot be shared - Briefly:

- (DOC 1) The conveyance and constitution dated March 1955 contained in Volume 999 Page 5 of the Register of Deeds held by East Riding of Yorkshire Council [ERYC] clearly shows that the land on which the hall stands was purchased by the PFC for £280.
- The constitution attached to this deed makes it clear that the committee of management (the PFC) are to indemnify the Parish Council (PC) of all liability. As I understand it, this is included to protect the taxpayer, and I believe this has been a subject of many exchanges between the relevant parties.
- Many in the parish, and at least one councillor on this council, still believes that this land was gifted by the Bethel family. I found no evidence of this; however, I have seen evidence suggesting a lease of the land by the Bethel family dated c1931 but it was superseded by the transfer of the land in 1955, as I stated earlier.
- It has been stated that the PFC was not responsible for building the village hall. This document (DOC 2) clearly shows that a member of this community, acting as the Chair of the PFC – Village Hall Sub-committee, has applied for and was granted funds to build the hall.
- I am also aware that in c1991, the PC agreed to take on the responsibility for running the hall.
- My understanding is that it is the intention of the PFC to draw legal documents to transfer responsibility for managing the hall to the new charity trustees. It can be argued that this is a matter for the PFC and should not be brought before you, but members of the PFC are reporting progress to the council as can be seen from the previous minutes and today's agenda.
- It is also very evident from the declaration of members' interests that there is considerable representation from the PFC and the new charity on this council.

These are the high-level highlights of my research, and to move this issue forward, I raise the following questions, which I hope will be seen as trying to assist:

1. Are all councillors fully aware of all the facts of this complicated issue?
2. Do your stakeholders and the community have the same understanding?
3. What are the implications for the taxpayer?
4. Have you taken into consideration the views of the public regarding your intentions?