

Item 15 – Resources Committee 28th July 2021

Report from ██████████ - Volunteer fundraiser and Executive Committee Member

Disused Methodist Chapel at Lumbutts near Mankinholes, Todmorden.

Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to keep members of Todmorden Town Council informed about a proposal by the 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts to take on (either by purchase or asset transfer) the disused Methodist Chapel at Lumbutts near Mankinholes, Todmorden.
- 1.2 The report asks the Town Council to consider supporting this project in several ways.

2. Background

- 2.1 The 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts was set up to serve children and young people in the Todmorden area in 1951, meaning the group have a 70-year history of providing positive activities in the area.
- 2.2 As of July 2021 the group has 160 children and young people as members, 60% being male, 40% female. The group caters for young people from all backgrounds and with all abilities. We have Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer sections covering young people from the ages of 6 to 18.
- 2.3 About 8 years ago the Methodist Chapel at Lumbutts was closed due to falling congregation numbers. Since then, the chapel has largely been unused except for a number of activities put on by the 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts (with permission of the trustees). This has involved overnight camps in the grounds, activity days in the grounds, and the grounds have formed a meeting place for our Explorer Unit during the Covid pandemic, when we were not able to use Central Methodist Church.
- 2.4 Over the past few years the chapel has begun to deteriorate, for example, there was a burst water pipe during last winter, and there have been several ceiling collapses.
- 2.5 In September 2020 ██████████ the Group Scout Leader of the 8th/26th approached the Methodist circuit to register an interest in the property on behalf of the 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts and to ask if the circuit might consider an asset transfer to the group or to have the

property valued with a view to the group putting a bid in to purchase the property outright.

- 2.6 To date the only response from the circuit has been to state there are outstanding legal issues they have re access to the property and the fact that the property includes a graveyard.
- 2.7 In 2021 the Group Scout Leader again approached the circuit with a more formal proposal to allow the Scout Group to lease the building to give them time to sort out the legal issues, there has been no response to this offer.

3 Aims & Objectives of the Project

3.1 The project aims to

- Be a base for activities for the 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts
- Act as a young person's resource in the Todmorden area
- Act as a venue for outdoor activities locally
- Act as a venue for outdoor activities available to other scout and youth groups in the wider area
- Refurbish a Grade 2 listed building for community use
- Maintain a Grade 2 listed building and its graveyard for community access
- Bring a community building back into use
- Work together with Todmorden Town Council and other organisations for the wider benefit of the Todmorden area
- Be a part of neighbourhood working across the area
- Have the building available for use by other community groups.
- Have the building available for use by the local community as a village hall.

4 Benefits

The project will have a number of benefits:

- 4.1 A disused Grade 2 listed building will be refurbished, maintained and brought back into community use
- 4.2 The 8th /26th Calder Valley Scouts will have a base which they can work from as they continue to expand.
- 4.3 The Methodist Church will, if they choose, pass their building from one form of community ownership to another, and, if the building is purchased by the 8th/26th, will benefit from the funding they receive. The liability for the graveyard will also pass to the 8th/26th.

- 4.4 The Todmorden area will have another community resource available to local residents and community groups.
- 4.5 Young people will have a resource they can use to build skills in outdoor activities, water safety, orienteering and teambuilding.

5 Preparation

- 5.1 The group have contacted a number of infrastructure organisations to ask for support in developing this project including Community Foundation Calderdale, VSI (Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Alliance) and Locality.
- 5.2 VSI are supporting the group in deciding on the best governance structures to take the project forward and creating a business plan.
- 5.3 Locality are supporting the group in potentially applying for the building to be an asset of community value, allowing the group time to raise funds to purchase the property. They are also offering advice on potential mortgage providers.
- 5.4 Locality have advised that in applying to Calderdale MBC to have the building listed as an asset of Community Value Todmorden Town Council could make such application.
- 5.5 If CMBC agree to list, then should the Chapel be placed on the market for sale. TTC would be advised, and the clock started to raise funds within the 6-month required period.

6 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts Request from Todmorden Council

- 6.1 The 8th/26th Calder Valley Scouts is asking Todmorden Town Council to support this project in several ways including:
 - Supporting the project in principle
 - Writing letters of support if needed e.g., for funding applications the 8th/26th may make.
 - Consider making an application to CMBC to list as an asset of community value
 - Consider making a nominal contribution toward development costs (not more than £5K) as part of third-party funders to help lever in grant funds and or support crowdfunding and or mortgage assistance.
 - Consider supporting large funding bids (when made) with match funding if possible.
 - Generally helping us to change an empty, deteriorating building back into a community asset.