



## Report from the Wolverley Memorial Project Group - Chair Review

The Wolverley Memorial Project started in November 2014. The Project Group was established as a delegated sub group of the Wolverley Memorial Hall Charity Committee.

The Project's aim was to bring all the stakeholders on the site together, housed in one purpose-built building to remove the burden of the upkeep of all the buildings on the Wolverley Memorial Hall Charity site.

The agreed Purpose and Scope of the Project was to

*“create a hub for community and recreational activities and services, by redeveloping the Wolverley Memorial Charity's site occupied by Wolverley Memorial Hall, Sports and Social Club, Tennis Club, Bowls Club, Children's Play Area, Sea Scouts and Recreational Ground to meet that purpose. The new complex should enhance the services and recreational life of the residents of Wolverley and the surrounding villages and urban conurbations and reaffirm the complex as a memorial to all those who have died, and to provide a focus for remembrance.”*

The Project was started in the knowledge that the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund was funding big build projects in deprived areas. After consultation, it was confirmed that our postcode would qualify us for a grant in excess of £1 million.

The main obstacle encountered was getting an agreement with the Sports and Social Club as it wished to retain its independence. It was essential this was resolved for the project to obtain access to Grant Funding from the National Lottery as it was clear there would not be funding for private member's based organisations.

Over a lengthy period of back and forward negotiation, eventually a solution was found by designing a building in which the Social Club could have use of part of the new facility and in return would pay rent on that area and any other function rooms it chose to hire. This agreement was required for the Charity to apply for planning permission.

During the 4 years while those discussions took place, the Wolverley memorial Project Group ran a number of fundraising events, including Fashion Shows; Beer Festivals; Country Fayres; Craft Fairs and sponsored cycle rides. Those and other events were extremely successful and in total the Project raised over £135k of income. Expenditure on professional fees, planning application costs, advertising and costs associated with fundraising activities total c. £65k. This resulted in the New Project Development Fund having a net balance of £70,330.

It is important to note that over the last two years there has been no fundraising due to the following circumstances:

- I. In August 2018, after receiving full planning permission for the Project, the Charity met with the local representative of the National Lottery to agree next steps. Unfortunately, the meeting did not go to plan. At that meeting the Charity was informed that the Lottery had changed its rules and would now not be granting more than £100k for any one project. The whole group was devastated.
- II. Having lost the most significant funding stream, the Project Group approached a number of organisations for advice. The most encouraging outcome was at a Wyre Forest District Council meeting where the Council informed us that they would be supportive of a plan to build an integrated facility on the playing field site at Mill Lane with the Wolverley Playing Field Trust, enabled by the proceeds from disposing of the developed portion of the Wolverley Memorial Hall site. We then held in confidence discussions with all involved stakeholders including Sebright School, the Parish Council and the clubs on the Memorial Hall site. All were supportive apart from the Wolverley Playing Field Trust which wished to remain independent and thus rejected the proposal.
- III. The pandemic.

For the future – the need for the Wolverley Memorial Project is still there.

Whilst the trustees of the Memorial Hall Charity (Graham Wallis in particular) have been successful in raising c. £136,000 of specified grant funding to carry out renovations and repairs to keep the existing Hall open. However, the Hall, Social Club, and Pavilion are all timber framed buildings and whilst the life of the Hall has been extended by external cladding, all buildings will require replacement within a generation, some sooner than others.

Effectively we have extended the useful life of the existing Memorial Hall for another 10-15 years. It provides a welcome “sticking plaster” solution to give us time to raise additional funds to add to the balance of the Charity’s New Project Development Fund - but it is only that.

It should be noted that no money from the New Project Development Fund has been used for the Memorial Hall refurbishment.

The long-term plan still remains for the development of a new integrated community facility in Wolverley, incorporating the stakeholders currently on the Wolverley Memorial Hall site.

In 2022, we will recommence the previous fundraising activities and hopefully add some new ones.

In addition, we anticipate that the renovation of the existing Memorial Hall will allow for more activities to raise income, both for its maintenance and to contribute more to the New Project Development Fund – The Memorial Hall Charity has itself generated £27.5k of the total New Project Development Fund money raised to date.

To those who ask for the money to be spent in other ways, I don’t believe we can.

The Wolverley Memorial Project Group is and always has been part of the Memorial Hall Charity. The Memorandum of Understanding of stakeholders contributing to the Project and the understanding of those donating was that their contributions were for the purpose of building a new Memorial Hall encompassing everyone on site.

With our charitable status we have also been able to claim gift aid on much of the money received for the purposes of the Wolverley Memorial Project and for these reasons I don't see any possible way the New Project Development Fund can be used for anything other than the original intended purpose.

The Charity's Trustees were also mindful of this when not using any of the Wolverley Memorial New Project Development Fund for the current renovation work to the Memorial Hall.

Richard Millner

Chair

**Wolverley Memorial Project Group**