

CHARNEY HALL & FIELD TRUST.

THE CASE FOR BROADBAND (and provision of a projector) IN THE VILLAGE HALL.

1. The hall does not have a landline telephone and mobile phone reception in the immediate vicinity is poor. Urgent or courtesy calls to and from users of the hall are not normally possible (the obligatory fire procedures notice displayed in the hall advises users to contact a neighbouring householder if need be to alert the fire brigade!!!).
2. Broadband mitigates the impact of this because most modern mobile phones are capable of connecting to a Wi-Fi network, thereafter using the internet to make calls rather than the radio phone signal – a feature called “Wi-Fi Calling”. Additionally, Broadband also makes it possible to use any number of Voice Calling/Messaging/Conference Apps on smart phones or tablets (e.g. WhatsApp, Zoom, Teams), and this is becoming the de facto way that many people choose to stay in touch in preference to the traditional phone call.
3. Covid-19 has resulted in some elderly or vulnerable residents feeling uneasy about using the hall and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Hall capacity has been reduced. The ability to arrange hybrid meetings (in person and virtually) will help to promote openness, transparency, social inclusion and equal opportunity whilst eliminating the potential health risks of physical attendance. The long period of lockdown has encouraged many more people of all ages to try online video calls, and this approach to meetings is therefore now considered mainstream.
4. Installation of broadband and the provision of a projector could benefit the Parish Council in particular as it is obliged to carry out ‘in person’ meetings. It would, for example, allow remote oral statements on planning applications and facilitate wider two-way consultation on key issues. Additionally, it has the potential to make meetings more effective and efficient and allow attendees to readily access agenda papers and other essential back up information. Meetings can also be recorded online if required, so that notes may later be taken or key decisions reviewed.
5. Some traditional hall activities are now provided virtually direct to home. Broadband would provide an opportunity for the tutor to continue to provide the session from home whilst allowing participants to participate in the hall with community ‘meet up’ benefits. It also exponentially increases the scope and reach for presenters / teachers / hosts / guests of sessions, since if someone is presenting remotely it makes no difference whether they’re in Lyford or Lanzarote.
6. Broadband would open up opportunities for those hiring the hall, e.g. children’s parties – most music listening these days is purchased and delivered online via streaming services such as Spotify or Apple Music; instead of buying physical copies (e.g. Compact Discs), music is instead delivered on demand – i.e. streamed live to the device when requested - but that requires a broadband signal to operate effectively.

7. Availability and use of broadband is the new norm (90% of village halls responding to a national survey have the facility -ACRE survey 2020).
8. Advice from David Harman indicates superfast broadband would be sufficient for our needs. BT Business deals vary seasonally but typically the cost is around £25-30 per month. Accordingly, our outline application to the County Council for consideration to be given to the installation of ultra-fast broadband could be withdrawn.
9. In addition to the cost of broadband at say £30 per month, one-off expenditure of circa £250 would be needed for a projector to be used to display a presenter's laptop screen onto the existing screen. The recurring costs could be partially offset by an across the board increase in hiring fees with the balance classed as essential hall expenditure. This would be consistent with the way we treat other hall facilities which are available but not used by all hirers of the hall e.g. tables and chairs, oven and catering equipment etc.
10. By way of an aside the charity regularly incurs expenditure on field facilities which are provided for but not used by all villagers.
11. David Harman has kindly offered to brief CHAFT (and other interested parties) on the technology available and its potential use.

RECOMMENDATION

The Management Committees is recommended to agree to the arrangement of a short informal briefing by David Harman. Invitations to go the Parish Council and others with a potential interest in this initiative.

David Sibbert 21/09/21.