

CHARNEY HALL & FIELD TRUST

BROADBAND IN CHARNEY BASSETT VILLAGE HALL

On Wednesday 3rd November 2021, a group of Trustees of CHAFT and members of the public met to discuss the possibility of installing broadband to the village hall and how it might be used. David Harman who works in the tech industry talked us through the ways in which broadband might be of use to users of the hall. The below case for broadband was circulated before the meeting. The updates and clarification points are added in red.

Oxford County Council's Digital Infrastructure Programme is hoping to bring ultrafast broadband to Village halls and Community Centres. CHAFT have completed a questionnaire indicating their interest in the scheme. The final list of eligible premises will be published in due course.

Charney Bassett currently has access to superfast broadband giving typical speeds of 70/18. David Harman explained to the meeting that these were sufficient speeds for all the hall's needs. BT's ultrafast roll out schedule does not indicate that Charney Bassett will be getting ultrafast broadband in the near future indeed Wantage is not scheduled to get it until 2025.

The hall has a telephone line which would need to be reconnected. To enable meetings to be broadcast/received it will be necessary to purchase a projector and audio equipment. The annual cost of BT business broadband would be in the region of £420. In total it was felt that the cost of installation, running costs and equipment purchase would be about £1000. As part of the initiative the problem of acoustics in the hall would need to be addressed. This could be replacing the notice boards so that they are staggered or a wall hanging on one wall.

PROPOSAL Install broadband, purchase required equipment. Monitor for a period of 18 months to see how much it is being used. Budget of £1000.

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 there is a need to alert the fire brigade!!!).

There is a telephone line to the building this would need reconnecting cost £140

2. Broadband mitigates the impact of this because most modern mobile phones are capable of connecting to a Wi-Fi network, there after 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.

Switch on Wi-Fi calling in phone settings

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 conduct ‘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

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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.

Any meetings held in the hall could be accessed from a distance

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 are in Lyford or Lanzarote.

This would be unworkable for exercise classes but might work for other educational classes.

An audience in the hall could listen to a lecture for example.

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.

Need to revisit obtaining a Performing rights licence.

7. Availability and use of broadband are 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.

BT business is £35 per month incl, VAT £420pa.

Was not an application to OCC but an indication of interest.

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.

Increasing the hall hire may be counter productive as may put off some groups from hiring given the size of the hall and the numbers it can accommodate.

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.~~

David Sibbert. 05/09/21 DRAFT 2.

Christine Trotman 08/11/21