

Focus Group – Social & Community

Notes on meeting held on 7th February 2005 at the Vicarage.

Present: Sheila Brammer, David Pickford , Steve Rathbone, Zac Wilcox, Judy Wilkinson.

Topics discussed:-

Democracy

There is clearly quite a lot of uncertainty about the role, composition and power of the Parish Council. How are councillors nominated and elected? How do villagers contact them? What are their responsibilities and how much clout do they have? How does the Council relate to Macc. Borough Council and the Peak Park authority? How are the views of people in the age range 18 to 25 taken into account?

There is uncertainty about the effectiveness of the distribution of the existing Parish Council news letter and concern that its impact appears to be limited (see below). People don't seem to read it!

Information

In the village there exists a Parish Magazine compiled mainly by congregation members and distributed by the church to subscribers. In addition a Rainow website exists which contains little up to date news and is directed towards "outsiders". Notice boards exist, mainly used by local societies to advertise events, but since the village is strung out over a long distance and most people travel by car and have little chance to stop and read notices. Improving communications within the village does seem to be a major issue.

Could we have a "universal" village magazine combining church, parish council and general village news involving more people and directed at the population as a whole? Can the website be made interactive?

People

We need detailed information about the parish. The Macclesfield Borough census information relates to the Rainow Ward – what area does this cover?

Pubs

There are three pubs – how far could they be used for general social events, shopping, information distribution etc.

Village Hall & Community Buildings

Village Institute – is used by a large number of groups (Women's Institute, Playgroup, Mothers & Toddlers, Cubs, Guides, Keep Fit, Whist Drive, private parties, jumble sales etc. Many people do not know who owns the Institute or who is responsible for its upkeep and management. In some ways the building does not meet modern needs and lacks some facilities e.g. parking. Church Centre – is used for church events and a limited number of other events (Weds. Fellowship lunch, Ravens Youth Group and Mothers Union). Modern but lacks disabled access.

Rainow Primary School – is used for school-related events including the after-school group, PTA events etc. Modern, good parking, football pitch.

In discussion the possible use of the United Utilities building and site at Pedley Hill was raised.

In short, the village has several meeting rooms but two are largely focussed on use by particular groups (church and school) whilst none is ideal for all purposes. The availability of a good, multi-purpose community hall/social centre is an important issue. Could the Institute be sold and the proceeds used to buy and convert the United Utilities site?

Young & Old

The very young (pre secondary school) seem to be catered for but teenagers, however, appear to be a neglected group. For instance there is no scout group and no suitable premises for such a group. It seems that there is some problem with petty crime by teenagers at weekends mainly by incomers to the village from Macclesfield. The Ravens Group is small but with better promotion perhaps it could be enlarged. There is a need for consultation with teenagers and perhaps any Parish Plan Questionnaire should have a section specifically addressing their needs.

For people over 60 there is an Old People's Welfare Committee which organises trips, birthday gifts etc. The Women's Institute and Mothers Union also involves people in this age group.

Summary of Key Issues

Communications –

Universal Village Magazine?

Website more usable and relevant to people living in the village?

Need for better appreciation of Parish Council work and function

Understanding of roles of Macclesfield Council & Peak Park authority

Village Hall/Community Centre-

What is needed?

What are the limitations on the present facilities? Who controls them?

Can use be made of other existing buildings/sites? (e.g. United Utilities site)

Young People/ Seniors

What do teenagers and young adults want?

How can they get their views and needs heard?

Are the senior age group sufficiently catered for?

Representation of 18-25 year olds on Parish Council?

Pubs

Could pubs be a resource for other activities e.g. shop, information, etc. ?

