

Billingshurst Youth Café Project

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the Parish Council trying to provide a Youth Café?

For over ten years, provision of a facility for young people has consistently been demanded by the community and features in numerous local plans. Sussex Clubs for Young People (SCYP) who currently operate the weekly youth sessions, advise Church Hall locations aren't conducive to attracting young people.

2. What happened to the EYE Project?

Billingshurst Community Partnership have said that because it has proved difficult to secure capital funding for the project that they will no longer be pursuing the plan for a purpose-built youth facility in Myrtle Lane. They are hopeful that the extensive work they did to get them to the advanced stage they reached, might be useful to other groups in pursuing much-needed facilities for young people in our area. The property that the Council is looking into could not provide all the facilities which the bigger EYE Project might have been able to, but it would be a start and services and activities could be added as time goes by.

3. Why not host a trial Youth Café in the Billingshurst Centre, or another venue?

The Billingshurst Centre has limited booking availability and SCYP have said halls and community centres do not attract young people. The pavilion at Jubilee Fields has previously been used for youth sessions but has been deemed unsuitable.

4. Why not lease a venue first and what made the Council look at 83a High Street?

The Council owns no property that could host a youth facility. The Council considers that renting premises, especially as it may have to commit to at least a 3 or 5 year minimum period, would not be a good use of Council Tax payers money and that buying freehold premises was a good long-term investment for Council Tax payers. 83a High Street was on the market freehold and the self-contained flat upstairs made it particularly attractive as the rent would meet approximately half the loan repayment costs. The former Barclay Bank site was on the market for considerably more and since it has received residential consent, is likely to have increased in value still further.

5. Isn't this property a bit small for a youth facility?

It isn't very big, but at the moment there is nothing permanent in the village for young people outside school. We need to start somewhere and if it is a runaway success, we will have something to build upon in possibly larger alternative premises.

6. Who are Sussex Clubs for Young People?

Celebrating 80 years since our foundation, Sussex Clubs for Young People are committed to developing a vibrant grassroots led voluntary and community youth sector, which involves,

empowers and meets the needs of young people in Sussex. We currently support over 130 youth clubs in Sussex. We respond to the challenges of delivering meaningful youth work and we constantly strive to provide fresh, fun and rewarding activities for the young people of Sussex. SCYP is a registered charity.

SCYP currently provide weekly youth sessions in the village on behalf of the Council and have been doing so for some time.

7. What Youth Cafe costs will fall on the Council Tax-Payer?

SCYP will, subject to approval of their Business Plan for the unit, be offered a full repairing lease of the ground floor on a peppercorn rent. They will be expected to meet all necessary fit-out costs and running costs. [As a registered Charity, they will be eligible for 80% Mandatory Non-Domestic Rate relief and be eligible for further Discretionary relief.] The Parish Council will continue to provide the same level of funds.

8. Will the Youth Café cause a nuisance to neighbours?

Youth sessions are currently held at the URC Hall in West Street, (less than 200 yards away from the proposed location) and the Council has never received any complaints from neighbours. The youth sessions will shortly be moving to the nearby Women's Hall. The Youth Café would only operate early evening, finishing no later than 9pm and not open on a Sunday. During the day the facility may be used by other groups looking for a small space in which to meet, in order to maintain an income stream. It would be manned at all times. It should be stressed that the unit is very small and therefore only able to host a relatively small number of visitors at any one time. There is insufficient space to house pool tables or discos. The site is already next to an Ice Cream Parlour, children's playground and community hall, none of which cause nuisance as far as we are aware.

9. Who will want to live in a flat above the Youth Café?

As stated above, the facility will not operate past 9pm or on Sundays. Any tenant would be made aware of the planned use below. It should be pointed out that many residents elsewhere in the centre of the village live above hot-food takeaways, which close at 11pm.

10. Does the Council have the expertise to manage residential property?

Like many owners of property rented out, the Council would use a letting agent, who have the necessary expertise.

11. What happens if the flat tenants don't pay their rent?

By using professional Letting Agents, who will often ask for a significant deposit and several months rent in advance, the risks of no-payment of rent are minimised.

12. Where will the Youth Café users park?

The target audience will be below 17 so users will not yet be able to drive. Being in a central location, the users should all be able to walk to it. Only one of the three car parking spaces is required for the one member of staff.

13. If the Council receives more Yes responses and gets approval for a loan, will there be any other costs associated with this venture?

The Council believes it has identified all costs associated with this purchase, both to buy and ongoing. It hopes to let the flat and ground floor ASAP in order to minimise Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) on unoccupied property.

14. What will happen to the Ground Floor if either the Youth Café does not happen or it fails?

In this case, the Council could look at alternative community uses, such as housing the Community Wardens (who are currently based in the Changing Rooms at the Billingshurst Centre). Or, it could try to let the property for commercial use or seek planning permission for a residential unit.

15. What happens to the money if the property is sold once the loan is repaid?

The Council can only spend capital receipts on capital projects, so the proceeds could be put towards another project/s.

16. Why doesn't the council focus on other issues such as crime, anti-social behaviour, dog fouling and speeding?

The council is involved in many activities in our community and does take an interest in such things! Our Neighbourhood Wardens work alongside partner organisations such as HDC and Sussex Police who are ultimately responsible for such matters.