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*Delivering a brighter, greener future for all*

08/09/2023

Mike Dawson

Ref: Warminster Community Hub Building

Dear Mike,

### **Community Hub Building - Social Value**

**Warminster Town Council believes the Community Hub Building (aka the Hub Building) should be transfer to them at nil consideration (nil rent or no premium), and submits the following evidence that the social benefit of the transfer is of greater community value than the actual value of the site and the social benefit will be enhanced through ownership by the town council.**

In April 2021, Warminster Town Council put in an application for a Community Asset Transfer for the community hub building in Warminster.

The Hub Building was purpose build for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and opened in 1990. CAB relocated and the building has had various occupants over the years.

The Warminster and Villages Community Development Trust took on a 25 year lease on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008 when the building was owned by West Wiltshire District Council. There is therefore about 10 years for the lease to run. The rent was set at £1900 a year.

However, The Warminster and Villages Community Development Trust is largely dormant at the moment and has indicated it would be happy to surrender the lease to Warminster Town Council.

For many years now the hub building has been underutilised – with just two occupants.

i) The Information Point – This is open 6 days a week 10am - 1pm. It is staffed entirely by volunteers. (a total of 18 hours a week). They occupy part of the ground floor, which has separate access and is self-contained. (It is about 20% of the total building)

ii) Cornerstone - a local charity based upon a Christian ethos, set up to help relieve poverty and distress whilst promoting social inclusion and cohesion amongst the

people of the Warminster community area. Cornerstone is staffed entirely by volunteers. Cornerstone 's opening hours are 10am till 12:30pm Monday, Wednesday & Friday = 7 hours a week. They use about 40% of the building.

Since May 2023, they have been joined by Warminster Town Council in the form of Warminster and Westbury CCTV Partnership – this takes up much of the upper floor, again about 40% of the building.

The Information Point used to play a valuable role in sale of tickets to Longleat, Centre Parks and various coaches, but this service has been superseded by the internet and smart phones.

Reliant on elderly volunteers it still provides a low-level tourist information type service but, this could well be handled by the Athenaeum Centre or the Town Council itself.

Cornerstone provide many valuable services, they use about 40% of the building, but being open just 7 hours a week.

As mentioned, more recently, CCTV has occupied the top floor.

Warminster Town Council manages the Warminster and Westbury CCTV Partnership. They have just invested in a £180,000 upgrade to the CCTV system and control room.

The CCTV is digital and state of the Art. The Chief Constable of Wiltshire visited shortly after it opened and declared it as a role model for the rest of Wiltshire.

The CCTV system is a huge asset to both Warminster and Westbury and has the potential to provide the same service for other towns and parishes in Wiltshire. This is of huge social benefit.

There is no real income from either Cornerstones or the Information Point to the Warminster and Villages Community Development Trust.

The Town Council cannot see how the community hub building is a strategic asset or of any significance to Wiltshire Council. It is not likely to be redeveloped and has limited uses due to its layout and location.

Wiltshire Council has not spent any money on the building and the rental income to Wiltshire Council is minuscule in terms of Wiltshire Councils' budget.

It has no potential as commercial space and is only suited for community use.

The town council is best placed to take on the management and maintenance of this building. The town council would be able to take on the delicate negotiations with the existing users so that a way forward can be found which maximises the community use of the building.

The current set up is a bit absurd. Wiltshire Council leases the building to the Warminster and Villages Community Partnership for a modest rent. This rent is in

reality paid for by the Town Council who give a grant to the Warminster and Villages Community Partnership who use the grant to pay the rent to Wiltshire.

The Warminster and Villages Community Partnership then let the town council use 40% of the building at a peppercorn rent and payment of utilities.

It would be much more straightforward if the building was just transferred over to the town council.

The community hub is thus really an oddity in that it remains with Wiltshire Council who have no use for it, whereas under the town council it could be a useful community asset.

If Wiltshire Council is minded insist on best consideration, then the town council might be prepared to take on a 99 year lease at the current rent £1,900 pa.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Dommett', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Tom Dommett CiLCA  
Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer