

Villagers must ‘work together’ on hall plan

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Residents were castigated for infighting and “vile emails” during a meeting to discuss rival plans to replace their village hall.

At Monks Eleigh Parish Council’s packed annual meeting on Monday, villagers were urged to work together to find a solution.

The current hall, on Church Hill, has only two more years of use left as the structure has ‘concrete cancer’ and residents have two plans on the table – one for a community hall in the grounds of the village primary school, and an alternative one dubbed plan B on the village’s recreation site.

After a lengthy debate, parish council clerk Vicky Waples said: “I’m quite embarrassed by you lot. You need a new village hall and you ought to all come together; you need a meeting.”

Referring to emails circulated around the village about the topic, she said: “Some are vile and vicious and not very mature.”

Sarah Hodgkinson, of Church Hill, chairman of the community hall bid, said it had secured a £185,000 grant from Suffolk County Council and an “in principle” interest-free loan for the value of the current village hall site, which cannot be sold because a buyer cannot be found.

She said the group would be meeting the county council in June and wanted other village groups to be present, and a pre-meeting to be held before that to discuss the topic.

Villager Peter Maynard said: “I think it is very sad we seem to have two competing plans for the village.”

Community hall project manager Barry Jewitt said: “We were ready to proceed but we couldn’t sell the old village hall. That’s when the frustration began. The sooner the groups meet to decide on this, the better.”

Villager Kathy Haddow, from The Street, praised the parish council for its alternative scheme on the recreation ground, saying it had acted responsibly.

She said: “I am very concerned about the break clauses with Suffolk County Council. I really don’t feel we have got all the facts.”

Norman Towers, from the parent, teacher and friends association at the primary school, said he was worried about road safety if the hall was built on the recreation ground.

But youth club manager Tom Day, 21, from The Street, said he supported the plan as it was right next to the widely-used public playground.