

BRENCHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

REPLACEMENT OF MATFIELD PAVILION

Background

1. The parish of Brenchley is a rural parish, some six miles to the east of Tunbridge Wells in Kent. It lies within the area served by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Brenchley Parish Council is responsible for two villages (Brenchley and Matfield), one hamlet (Petteridge) and the rural areas around them.
2. In September 2011, Matfield Pavilion, owned by the Parish Council and set on Matfield Village Green, was destroyed by fire. The cause was an electrical fault following rodent damage to hidden cabling. The pavilion provided a base for Matfield Green Cricket Club whose home ground is on the Village Green.
3. This document sets out Brenchley Parish Council's policy on the replacement of the Pavilion.

The Council's Sports Strategy

4. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has a published leisure strategy which aims:

“to facilitate provision of a diverse range of high quality and accessible facilities, activities and opportunities, which demonstrably meet local needs, enhance the quality of life, and contribute to the achievement of safer and stronger communities and improved health and well-being”.

Brenchley Parish Council strongly supports this strategy and believes that sports provision, in particular, can play a major role in helping rural communities to thrive.

5. The Parish Council has an active policy of supporting sports and other community organisations. In recent years, it has made grants available to sports clubs in Brenchley, both directly (to the Brenchley Cricket Club) and indirectly via the trustees of the local charity which maintains the majority of sports facilities in Brenchley. Matfield Green Cricket Club has been aided financially via a waiver of any rent payable on the pavilion. Earlier this year, after consulting with local residents, the Council sponsored work to renovate an old playing field in Petteridge, in association with the Kent High Weald Partnership and community volunteers. And the Council has aspirations to buy land in Matfield which could be developed to provide sports facilities for young people in particular.

The Need to Replace Matfield Pavilion

6. Cricket has been played on Matfield Village Green for very many years. The First World War poet, Siegfried Sassoon (who was born in the village), mentions playing cricket on the Green, around 1900, in his autobiography.¹ Matfield Green Cricket Club is a thriving local club which plays regular, competitive, non-league matches throughout the season. Without a pavilion, and the changing and other facilities it provides, it is extremely unlikely that the Club will be able to continue to play cricket in Matfield and the club itself will probably cease to exist. For the 2012 season, they have made arrangements to use one of the local pubs for changing purposes and friendly neighbours are storing equipment but this can be no more than a short-term solution.

¹ “The Old Century and Seven More Years”

7. It is also the case that this is the only outdoor, organised sports facility in the village of Matfield (the village hall provides badminton courts) and this, in Brenchley Parish Council's view, adds weight to the need to ensure that the pavilion is rebuilt.

Pavilion Requirements

8. The old pavilion was constructed in the 1970s and fell well short of modern building or cricket pavilion standards. It lacked proper insulation or heating and so could not be used in winter. The Parish Council considers that this resulted in the inefficient use of what could be a significant community resource and had been considering a refurbishment plan before the fire.

9. Any new building will be optimised for use as a cricket pavilion and the changing areas, etc will be constructed to Sport England guidelines as set out in its Pavilions and Clubhouses Guidance Note. In addition to changing, shower and toilet facilities, there will be internal and external storage, a kitchen and a club room of about 50m². The building will occupy approximately the same footprint as its predecessor but, because of its design, will provide slightly more internal space (approximately 150m²) which will allow it to meet Sport England guidelines.

10. Such a design will also be consistent with year-round use by other community groups. It will provide a home for the Guides (who were only able to use the old building during the summer months) and for the recently formed youth group – both of which engage in informal sporting activities. It will also be made available (when not required for cricket purposes) to other local community groups and will support major (non-cricketing) events on the Green as the old building did.

11. The new pavilion will be positioned in the south west corner of Matfield Village Green either on the site of the old building or close to it. While this is not the ideal orientation from a cricketing viewpoint, it is the only practicable location, given the constraints imposed by roads, neighbouring houses and the village pond. Matfield lies in the Kent High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Village Green is at the heart of the Matfield Conservation Area. Within the financial constraints set by the Parish Council, the design of the new building must, therefore, be of high quality, incorporate the best elements of modern cricket pavilions and allow it to sit comfortably alongside the traditional Kentish architecture of the 18th and 19th century houses surrounding the Green.

Pavilion Funding

12. The old pavilion was insured for £125,000 and that sum has now been received by the Parish Council. Given the importance of good design, an architect has been appointed. The Council has been advised that, to meet building regulations and other standards, the minimum construction cost of a new building will be £1,000 per m² (£150,000 for a 150m² building). Additional funds will be required for fees, demolition of the remains of the old pavilion and fitting out the new building. Some contingency provision must also be allowed. The Council has thus been advised that the replacement cost of the new pavilion is likely to be £200,000.

13. There is, therefore, a shortfall in funding of up to £75,000. To procure this, the Parish Council will:

- Submit an application for funding to Sport England under their 'Inspired Facilities' programme;
- Explore with Kent County Council the possibility of a small grant from their Small Capital Projects Fund; and

- Initiate a fund-raising programme among the local community.

The Council may also be able to make a small additional contribution from its own funds but has to bear in mind that this could only be at the expense of other community projects. The possibility of any increase in the Council's precept has been ruled out for the time being, in the current climate of constraints on the public sector.

Stakeholder and Community Involvement

14. The design and precise location of the new pavilion will be determined in close consultation with stakeholders (in particular, Matfield Green Cricket Club) and the wider community. Meetings have already been held with representatives of the Cricket Club, Guides, and the Youth Group to ensure that their requirements are taken properly into account.

15. The Council will hold public meetings in the village to seek community views on the new pavilion. The first of these, to present initial designs, was held on 17 March. It was well-attended and the overall concept met with a generally favourable response. The analysis of comments made will help inform detailed design and development plans. In addition, the village website and magazine will publicise developments and invite comments, as appropriate. It is also hoped that the fund-raising initiative will include some form of sponsorship of elements of the pavilion so that those who donate money can feel that they have a closer connection with the new building.

16. The Cricket Club has agreed to devise a Sports Development Plan which will help ensure that it can make best use of the new facilities to develop participation in the game amongst local residents.

Timescale

17. Following the initial consultation process, and pre-planning discussions with the Borough Council, Brenchley Parish Council anticipates being able to submit a planning application to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in April/May 2012. The process of granting planning permission could take up to two months (until June/July) and the Parish Council has then to submit the project to the Central Planning Inspectorate for Commons Consent (under the 2006 Commons Act), as Matfield Village Green is a registered common. This will involve another round of consultation and the Council has been advised that the process will take at least three months (until September/October).

18. Once permission to build has been given and provided that adequate funding is in place, tender action and the appointment of a contractor should take about two months (until November/December). Construction will then take about six months so, if all goes smoothly, the new pavilion should be open in mid-summer 2013.

**Brenchley Parish Council
March 2012**