

Everdon Parish Council

Unity in the Community

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre

A presentation

By Everdon Parish Council

to the Parishioners of Everdon

on the proposed acquisition and future operation of

The Outdoor Learning Centre

at Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre

5th February 2019

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre - Background

- For those of you who have lived in the village for some years, you will be aware that the Outdoor Learning Centre (OLC), in its various guises, has been under threat of closure on a number of previous occasions
- Many Parishioners have, in the past, served on what used to be an Advisory Board, on which Everdon Parish Council (EPC) always had a representative
- In 2008, the Friends of Everdon Trust (FET) was formed, primarily to raise finance in order to award grants to underprivileged children, to enable them to attend courses at OLC
- In early 2018, the latest opportunity for OLC arose

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre - background

- Following the financial crisis at Northamptonshire County Council (NCC), Everdon Parish Council (EPC) and the Friends of Everdon Trust (FET) were approached by NCC, to ascertain whether they would be interested in purchasing the Outdoor Learning Centre (OLC) as a going concern
- As part of a financial recovery plan, NCC is seeking to convert assets into revenue
- Two Parish Councillors (Nichols & Osborne) led the discussions on behalf of EPC and FET. Councillor Osborne is also a Trustee of FET
- Due to the commercially sensitive nature of this transaction, a confidentiality agreement was signed between the parties and as a result, negotiations to date were required to be carried out in private

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre - background

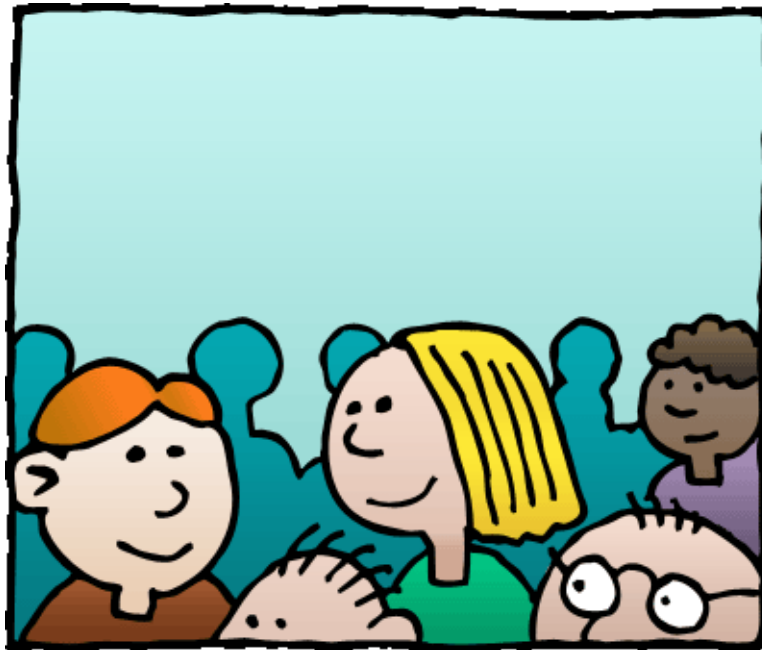
- At an early stage during the discussions, a non-binding valuation report of the premises was commissioned and undertaken by a qualified RICS valuer. The valuation fee was paid by a charitable grant
- The valuation report quotes a value of £320,000 for the OLC premises
- In addition, the building has a fully fitted commercial kitchen and a modern heating system, which were installed during a major refurbishment and capital investment programme in 2014/15
- Subsequent professional advice recommended that ownership of the building and operation of the educational facility should be separated
- In order to secure the option, it was therefore proposed that EPC should purchase the building, with a charity to run OLC

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre - background

- FET, which is an unincorporated trust, voted to change its status to that of a charitable company, to be re-named Everdon Outdoor Learning Trust (EOLT), which will take over the running of OLC. This transition is currently ongoing and is subject to approval by The Charities Commission
- On this basis, EPC made a conditional offer to NCC of £250,000 for the OLC building and fixed assets (including the kitchen and heating system), which has been accepted by NCC
- This offer is conditional upon EPC being able to raise the necessary finance and for EOLT to run OLC, as an independent organisation
- Thanks to the professional qualification of The Clerk, EPC has the Power of Competence and is therefore a suitably qualified body which is able to raise finance for such purposes

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – the process

The most important part of this process, is engagement with Parishioners, as your support is needed. Negotiations have now reached the stage where it is possible to place this information in the public domain and to inform and involve Parishioners



Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – the process

- The most popular method for raising such finance, is to approach the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who, via the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) will normally support projects of this nature
- Loans for this purpose are available with repayment terms of up to 50 years and interest rates from as low as 0.85% pa
- If the acquisition proceeds, EPC will own a valuable asset, worth at least £70,000 more (nearly 30%), than the purchase price

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Rationale for the purchase

- One of the principal reasons for considering the acquisition is to protect the village against any speculative developments, residential or otherwise, as EPC will have control of the site
- Speculative developers are normally willing to fund the legal costs associated with such applications and appeals at a greater level than the District Council, which lacks significant funds to defend unwanted developments. There have been several such cases locally over recent years
- There is also a risk that the property could be left empty and fall into disrepair, if NCC simply decides to vacate the premises

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Rationale for the purchase

- In addition, both EPC and EOLT support the idea that OLC should continue to provide a unique educational experience for children, as does NCC
- There will be opportunities for Parishioners to join the board of the EOLT in order to contribute to the running of OLC, by using their own professional skills
- EOLT will rent the building from EPC and will be responsible for all day to day activities associated with the administration and operation of OLC

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Structure

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graph TD; A[Everdon Parish Council  
(Owner & Landlord)] --- B[Everdon Outdoor Learning Trust  
(Operator & Tenant)];
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Everdon Parish Council
(Owner & Landlord)

Everdon Outdoor
Learning Trust
(Operator & Tenant)

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Rationale for the purchase

- OLC has been part of the village for 140 years, firstly as a school, then for the last 45 years, as a Field Centre/Outdoor Learning Centre
- This facility provides a unique educational experience to children of all ages and backgrounds, who for some, is their first and sometimes only experience of “the countryside” and their only “holiday”
- Generally speaking, most Parishioners are supportive of OLC, although it does negatively impact on some residents, particularly those who live close to the village green
- OLC is one of a number of “centres of the community” in Everdon, particularly on Grand Fete day
- Sensitive, focused, and community-backed management of OLC, by EOLT, would be an important feature of this project
- OLC is managed by a team of dedicated, loyal, experienced and enthusiastic staff

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Rationale for the purchase

- Everdon Parish Council and Everdon Outdoor Learning Trust believe that the Outdoor Learning Centre is an asset worth preserving



Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Rationale for the purchase

- OLC is a small, but profitable business, with the opportunity for significant growth, once it is being operated as a truly independent organisation
- OLC will retain its existing staff, if EOLT takes over
- Surplus rental income received by EPC from EOLT can be used for a range of projects, all of which would benefit the community
- Consideration could be given to any projects or services, either one off or regular, which would support the community
- At present, all Parish Council spending is raised via an annual precept, which is funded exclusively by the Parishioners of Everdon

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – EPC Proposal

- Subject to Parishioner support, EPC would propose borrowing a maximum of £300,000 over 25 years, in order to fund the purchase of the building and to cover any associated legal costs
- At current rates of interest, this will cost £14,500pa, inclusive of capital and interest
- It is anticipated this expenditure would be fully covered by the rental income which EPC would receive from EOLT, for the use of the premises
- It is therefore envisaged that the project would be self-funding, so there would be no impact on the annual precept

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Next steps

- Assuming that the majority of Parishioners wish to support the acquisition, EPC will submit a formal application to MHCLG for funding
- The acquisition process will include a business plan, together with financial and legal due diligence
- Due diligence will include :- verification of the financial figures supplied by NCC on behalf of OLC; confirmation of the legal ownership of the property; a building survey report; details of the formal lease arrangements between EPC and EOLT..... and anything else deemed necessary
- The entire process will be overseen by professional advisors, in order to ensure that everyone is fully briefed in advance

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – Risks v Rewards

- In view of the advantageous purchase price, there will be a significant amount of equity in the property, which will help to reduce risk
- **If EOLT is unable to operate OLC as a profitable organisation, there would be the risk of the rent not being paid,** however, EPC understands that this risk is insurable and it would still have the option of finding a new tenant to operate OLC or to sell the property at a profit, whilst still being able to control the future use of the site
- Rewards could include enhanced community facilities and reduced precepts, whilst still maintaining the educational value of OLC
- EPC would be able to use excess funds for projects which would benefit the community

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre – and Finally

- Thank you for your attention and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have

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