

Angry protests after green centre 'farce'

by DOUG WYTHE

Date set for Green plan poll

HYTHE town council was due to meet last night to discuss the plan to build the community centre on the Green — 24 hours after the application was thrown out by Shepway planners.

The extraordinary meeting was called to discuss a proposal made at the town meeting last Tuesday to withdraw the planning application to build the centre on the Green.

Many councillors feel the meeting, and a referendum also requested at the town meeting, are now redundant as the application has already been refused by the district council.

But Hythe mayor Eileen Bailey said: "The extraordinary meeting was planned before the meeting on the 19th and it was originally called to discuss the question of CCTV in Hythe.

"But it was thought it could be useful to have one as near as possible to the town meeting and the date was the nearest we

could arrange otherwise we would not have enough time to give the councillors the required number of days notice.

The referendum which will have three questions, will take place in Hythe on Thursday, October 19, between 4pm and 9pm. The official questions on the notice published by Shepway District Council are:

1. Do you believe there is a need in Hythe for a new community centre?

2. Subject to any legal requirements, do you support the building of a community centre on a site in South Road?

3. Subject to any legal requirements, do you support the building of a community centre on a site in South Road?

There will be six polling stations: Seabrook Church, the former St Augustine's School, Mackeson Court, Sanford House, Palmash Hall and the hall at the back of the Light Railway Station.

Planning 'no' to Green site

From Front

More than 40 members of the public crowded into the council chamber in Stone Street for the debate which was also videoed and relayed for the public in the council's reception area.

The debate lasted less than 15 minutes and received about 50 letters from people campaigning against the centre being built on the Green.

votes to one with Councillor David Monk (Con), the only councillor to vote against.

After the meeting Garry Muers, chairman of the Hythe Green Preservation Society, said:

"I am well chuffed that this has been thrown out and I'm glad the committee came to the right decision."

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ANGRY Hythe residents are demanding a town meeting to register "no confidence" in the council in the wake of its decision to site the proposed £600,000 community centre on the green.

Resident Jack Hadlum, from Shepherd's Walk, has rallied protestors.

They have signed letters opposing the decision and are asking town clerk Des Knowles to tell the council they want an immediate public meeting.

Mr Hadlum said: "I was horrified at the council meeting. It was a farce."

"We turned up as members of the public to speak but were threatened with eviction by the police on duty."

"We had to remain silent and the councillors did not say much either."

"The green is not the place for the community centre. It was left to the children of Hythe. The council is totally wrong. There is a 400,000-volt electric cable under the green, and sewer pipes."

"To build there is a total danger to the community."

Councillors decided to put the community centre on the green by eight votes to seven, rejecting the alternative site of South Road.

It was one of the speediest council decisions ever made. There was little debate, but controversy came from Cllr Wendy Harris.

She asked Mayor Eileen Bailey, in the chair: "There have been rumours circulating this week."

"Could you confirm their accuracy by letting us know if a meeting has taken place with supermarket developers about the green as a proposed site?"

Cllr Harris added that she had heard there had been financial rewards or incentives offered if the council chose the green.

Cllr Geoffrey Partridge, chairman of the finance and general purposes committee, said there were no financial incentives involved in the decision.

Mr Muers said: "I am amazed that an item as important as the community centre has led to total silence from the 16 councillors here."

"I have never been enthusiastic about building a community centre. I am not convinced it is needed in Hythe."

"We have 17 halls — do we need another one? This new building will have to be subsidised. I am not convinced the people of Hythe want a community centre."

'Time to bury issue'

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7.12.95

HYTHE Green Preservation Society chairman Gary Muers has attacked Hythe council for "keeping the community centre issue alive". Mr Muers said: "There has been a referendum. The people of Hythe have said they do not want a community centre. The council should let it go."

The council is due to further debate the issue when the finance and general purposes committee meets tonight (Thursday).

Mr Muers said: "I don't know what else there is to discuss. Maybe only 16 per cent of the population went out to vote in the referendum but that reflects the feelings of the situation."

"For some reason this council will not stand by the referendum decision. This goes against the promise made by the mayor when she announced the referendum in the first place."

Mr Muers has now involved Mark Watts, MEP for East Kent. The society is also opposing the plan for a new sewage works in Range Road, Hythe.

Mr Muers said: "We shall take this one under our wing. It is something that is going to affect the people of Hythe."

Responding to last week's report that the council has money to spend on a facelift for the town, Mr Muers said the deplorable condition of the

green should be sorted out "for a start".

He added: "I can also name the 17 halls in Hythe that could be used instead of a new community hall. We have Brockhill School where you could certainly put on a top star entertainment show."

Mr Muers' list of alternative community centre halls in Hythe is: The British Legion, Light Railway hall, Brownies hall, Scouts, Wood Road hall, St John Ambulance Brigade hall, Canon Newman hall, Palmash village hall, Seabrook church hall, Catholic church hall, Methodist hall, United Reformed Church, two halls at Brockhill Park, Masonic hall, town hall, Portex.

Green protester's fury at 'thief' charge in Hythe town clerk's amazing outburst

A FRESH row has erupted in the debate about Hythe's community centre with town clerk Des Knowles accusing members of the Hythe Green Preservation Society of stealing a document.

Mr Knowles said the document, produced by the community centre trustees, had gone missing from a printing firm at the same time as a member of the Hythe Green Preservation Society was there.

It was being used to produce leaflets in support of the Green plan to be published by the community centre trustees.

The accusation came at an extraordinary meeting of the town council in response to a question from Councillor Wendy Harris.

She wanted to know the origins of a number of orange leaflets seen in the town in support of the Green site. She also wanted to know who had paid for them.

But instead of an answer Mr Knowles made the accusation and said: "The leaflets were printed from a document which was stolen from the printers. The document was put into the printers by the community centre trust."

"The printer gave access to the chairman of the Hythe Green Preservation Society and the document was missing after he had attended the premises."

Amidst a mixture of angry calls and laughter from a packed public gallery, Councillor Geoffrey Par-

tridge stepped in to tell councillors the trustees had ordered and paid for the leaflets.

But an alarmed Councillor Chris Capon demanded Mr Knowles's reply: "What he had said. He warned: 'You must say I understand it was stolen' or we are leaving ourselves open to be severely criticised."

Mr Knowles conceded: "I should have said I have been advised that the document, which was being used for the printing, disappeared from a desk during the day on which the adviser of the Green Preservation Society was on the premises."

After the meeting Garry Muers, chairman of the Hythe Green Preservation Society, said: "He effectively called us thieves and for such

accusations to be made in a council meeting — at which I have no right of reply — is a disgrace."

"It made me so angry I thought about seeking legal advice but there's no point. To get involved in any action against the council would only end up with Hythe people footing the council's legal bill through higher charges or a reduction of services and I don't want that."

He added: "I think the hysterical comment made at the meeting are the spiteful reaction of a council which is in complete disarray and which is furious that it has been outmanoeuvred at every turn by those of us fighting to keep the Green free from development."

● Green row: two resign — P.11

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