

Crawley Down Village Hall  
c/o 25 Fermandy Lane  
Crawley Down  
West Sussex, RH10 4UB

Subject: Crawley Down Village Hall

11<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Dear Mid Sussex District Councillors

We are writing to you as the trustees of the Crawley Down Village Hall charity.

Mid Sussex District Council have apparently decided to deprive the people of Crawley Down of a village hall. However, this decision has been taken at officer level only, and clearly a decision to deny Crawley Down such a popular and valuable resource should be that of the elected members. We are accordingly now writing to each and every member of the Council and asking that you take full responsibility for this matter.

While we say that the decision is being made at officer level, the fact that the Council has constantly moved the goal posts and reneged on solid commitments that it has made to us, and the people of Crawley Down, several times, suggests that someone is operating behind the scenes at the Council to try to thwart Crawley Down having a village hall.

While we are happy to provide in more detail the history of events that has led us to where we are now, here is the short summary:

Crawley Down has had a village hall since 1906. It is an extremely popular and valuable resource for the people of Crawley Down. By 2018 the old village hall on Turner's Hill Road was in serious need of renovation and lacked parking spaces. A plan was ventilated with Mid Sussex District Council to move the village hall to right next to the Havens Sports Field car park. In August 2018 the Council offered the charity a 250 year lease of the space at a £1 a year rent. The charity agreed to this offer and set about getting professional plans drawn up for the new hall. An open meeting was held for the people of Crawley Down, attended by many local residents, who approved the motion to proceed with the sale of the old hall and construction of the new hall in the new location. Thereafter the old property was put on the market and planning permission granted by the Council for the new hall. The new property would be purpose built and also offered extra child care facilities. The difficulty was that the cost of new construction was likely to be somewhat greater than the money that could be obtained from the sale of the old decrepit property. A local property developer, with experience in building village halls, however came forward with a proposal to build the new hall in exchange for the old property – thereby solving the problem. They needed to obtain planning permission to convert the old property into new dwellings before they could proceed. This was duly obtained, and they exercised their option to proceed.

While matters had been slowed down somewhat by COVID, everything was now ready to go. The old property was transferred to the developer in January 2024, and they were all prepared to build and have the new hall up and running in its new location by the

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early Summer of 2024. All that was required was for Mid Sussex District Council to abide by its commitment to grant the long lease.

There has then followed a now almost 2 year saga of the Council making agreements and failing to honour them.

Firstly, they sought to change the terms of what was agreed by shortening the term of the lease to 150 years and making the rent £1,636 a year. They then sought a £50,000 bond – to ensure that they were not left with a half built building. While these changes constituted a reneging on the original agreement, the trustees accepted them.

The trustees met with Mr Simon Hughes and others from the Council on 14 March 2024 and 22 July 2024. They were completely transparent with him, explaining exactly what the deal was that they had reached with the developer, and on both occasions answering any and all questions that he had.

Mr Hughes said at the end of both meetings that he understood the need to deal with matters rapidly, so that the people of Crawley Down would be without their village hall for as little time as possible – and also because the developer was all ready to go, but could not maintain a perpetual state of readiness because of the costs involved in doing so.

At the end of both meetings Mr Hughes promised rapid action. After the meeting on 22 July 2024 Mr Hughes said that the Council lawyers would be instructed to provide a draft lease as rapidly as possible. Thereafter the Heads of Terms were agreed and the statutory advertising done. But no draft lease was produced. Instead the Council kept inventing new reasons not to proceed. Although they suggested at one stage that they were simply following Council policy, when it was pointed out to them that that was not true, they abandoned that argument and thought of another.

Mr Hughes has just now again raised some completely new points – which really make no sense. His argument seems to be that the Council has decided to deprive the people of Crawley Down of a village hall because they believe that there is a possibility that the new village hall will not be built. Which is a completely ridiculous position to have.

Based on the original commitment of Mid Sussex to provide the long lease for the new hall, the charity has expended more than £30,000 on professional fees for the planning, as well as legal fees. It is now having to spend a further £4,000 or so simply to extend the planning permission, because the Council have wasted so much time.

The irony now is that, while the whole point of the agreement was that the people of Crawley Down would get a far superior new village hall at no cost to the taxpayer, if we

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now have to sue the Council to achieve it, it will cost the taxpayer thousands in legal costs, whatever the result of those proceedings.

The delay also creates problems for the developer. They were ready to go last Spring, and in the meantime many costs have risen, quite in addition to the costs of getting ready to go again.

We have repeatedly asked for another meeting with the Council to sort out any issues – only to be met with no response to this request, but continuing obfuscation and new excuses for not simply proceeding as promised.

The end result of the Council's failure to honour its commitments is that, 2 years down the line, the people of Crawley Down have lost their village hall – an asset of considerable importance to the village, and, in money terms, worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. In addition, the charity is tens of thousands of pounds down because it relied on the Council doing what it said it would do.

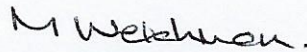
Thus instead of the people of Crawley Down successfully and happily enjoying their new village hall for more than a year now, we are left looking to sue the Council. It is frankly insane.

We therefore urge you and your fellow councillors to now take responsibility for the mess that has been created in your name. The trustees are mostly fairly elderly, we are all volunteers, and as you can imagine this has been extremely stressful for us.

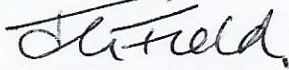
Please help us.

Yours faithfully

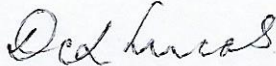
Signed by all trustees.



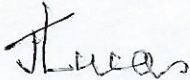
Marion Welchman



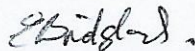
Jennifer Field



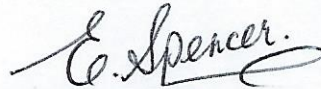
Adrian Lucas



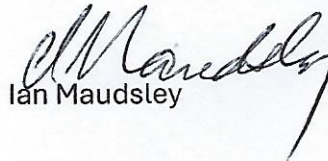
Jill Lucas



Ethel Bridgland

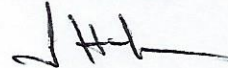


Elizabeth Spencer



Ian Maudsley

John Holman



Wendy Hamer

