

WALMER PARISH COUNCIL

New office and Community Hub

- Are you in FAVOUR of the parish council going ahead with the new office and community hub? YES / NO
- Are you in FAVOUR of the parish going ahead with the new office and community hub if it includes a Council Tax increase of 11% (equivalent to an average of 10.5p per week) which will help to pay off the Government loan? YES / NO

Name	
Address	
Signed	
Date	

Please send this survey questionnaire to the parish council office at the address below by: midday on Tuesday 10 November 2020

Any survey forms received after the deadline will be disregarded.

Walmer Parish Council, 8, The Strand, Walmer. CT14 7DY
The form can be emailed to: clerk@walmercouncil.co.uk

Please note that your contact details will be kept confidential for the purposes of the consultation only and will not be passed on to any third party. They will be destroyed in conjunction with the Council's privacy policy.



Walmer Parish Council, 8 The Strand, Walmer, Kent CT14 7DY

Dear Householder,

An opportunity has arisen for your Parish Council to stop renting and instead invest in a small suite of offices, in excellent order, which would be used as a new Parish Council office and community hub that would belong to the people of Walmer and would also deliver substantial savings over the long term.

I am writing to you because we are proposing to spend a small amount of your council tax to do this and we would like your approval to do so.

After the idea was reported in the East Kent Mercury several supportive residents contacted us with suggestions ranging from art exhibitions to office space for local entrepreneurs or business start-ups. All ideas which we will be happy to consider should the purchase go forward.

But the important question for you is 'how much will this cost?' The answer is, that because the cost will be shared by every council tax payer in Walmer, surprisingly little. We have been looking carefully at what we have in the bank and what we would need in order to be able to do this. After we have made sure that all our existing and proposed projects and running costs are safeguarded, we will need around another £200,000 to pay for the building. So we are proposing that we take advantage of a government scheme, via the Public Works Loans Board, to borrow a fixed sum of money at 2.4% for 20 years. We have been advised to ask for more than we need in case of unforeseen problems, so we will ask for up to £250,000 but will only take what we actually need. The cost of this to the average Walmer household would be £5.42 per year or only 10.5p per week.

Walmer is today one of the lowest cost Parish Councils in the Dover District. I am mentioning this to let you know that we husband your money carefully and every penny that is spent is only done so after rigorous scrutiny.

So, please examine the facts set out in this leaflet and consider supporting this request for permission to end the practice of handing your funds over to third parties with no long-term return and to purchase a property which, after the mortgage is paid off, will be rent free.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet and consider our request and let us know how you feel by sending back to us the form overleaf.

James Murray

Chair, Walmer Parish Council

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Why does the Council need to move offices?** The Council currently rents a one room office which has become unsuitable and has already cost us £65 000. The Council is thinking ahead and looking at reducing costs.
- **Why buy a property, why not rent elsewhere?** Buying a property means that the Council will have a permanent home and will not be paying taxpayers' money to a landlord. We will be able to put in energy saving measures to reduce costs and they, like the building, will be a permanent asset for the parish. To rent for the next 20 years at current commercial rates would cost us in the region of £240,000
- **Why have you chosen this property and have you looked at others?** Suitable properties that we could afford in Walmer, in excellent condition and with flexible accommodation rarely come on the market.
- **Is the Parish Council paying a fair price?** We think so. We have negotiated a fair price for both parties. An independent valuation by a professional valuer has been approved by Council.
- **Why does the Council need to increase its share of council tax? Surely there is enough money in reserves?** Some of the Council's reserves are already earmarked for specific projects. and the £150,000 which we hold in bank accounts is shrinking in value year by year as inflation increases and interest rates drop.
- **Will this take up all the Council's funds?** By taking out a mortgage of up to £250,000 (all of which we may not need) over 20 years at a fixed interest rate of 2.4% the council will be able to continue funding its existing projects, which residents have welcomed and enjoyed, as well as many new projects in the future.
- **Does the Council contribute to public amenities?** We do! Although the public toilets and the paddling pool are owned by Dover District Council. Walmer Parish Council pays £40,000 to DDC each year to keep them open for all.
- **How much will this cost me?** Just a few pennies a week. The average household will only pay an extra 10.5 pence per week or 42p per month. A total of £104 over 20 years and will still be cheaper than most parish and town councils in Kent including Deal. Walmer only receives a small fraction of your Council Tax - £48.66 per year for the average house. Kent County Council take £1,351, Dover District Council and the Police and the Fire and Rescue service take the rest.
- **Will you be able to hold your meetings in the new offices?**
Yes, the premises will accommodate most of our meetings including those with Walmer residents. A combination of increasing attendance at our planning and full Council meetings plus the Covid restrictions have resulted in our present offices being no longer suitable for larger meetings. We also intend to continue using the Zoom facility.
- **Can anyone else use the offices?** We have already received messages of support from residents who have suggested that we could use some space for local people starting a business or wanting to display their artwork or photographs. A sort of mini community hub.

Over the past 12 years or so Walmer Parish Council's good housekeeping has meant that the Council Tax which you have paid has meant we have managed to save significant funds towards the specific purpose of purchasing freehold premises and we have also funded and organized:

- The Brocante.
 - Kites on the Green.
 - Walmer in Bloom.
 - Allotments
 - Christmas Carols at the Bandstand
 - The Children's Festival.
 - Planting 50 trees in Walmer to help combat carbon emissions and ensure that we live in a more beautiful environment
 - Building a memorial to all who served at the Walmer aerodrome in World War 1 and World War 2.
 - Funding all the public toilets in the parish.
 - Funding the paddling pool on Walmer Green.
- We have also supported many local organizations and good causes including:**
- The annual Carnival.
 - The Deal Music Festival
 - The Sports Spectacular
 - Classic Car Show
 - The Astor Theatre
 - Royal National Lifeboat Institution
 - Road Safety improvements for walkers, families and cyclists
 - Royal British Legion
 - Local churches.
 - Provision of a lifesaving defibrillator
 - The Downs Sailing Club
 - The Deal Rowing Club.
 - Deal and Betteshanger Rugby Club
 - Deal Victoria and Barnes Close Cricket Club
 - The Royal Marines Trail
 - Supported the publication of 'The Environment of Walmer'

In addition, we have made sure that our previous purchases of Hawkshill, the Drill Field and the land at York and Albany are maintained for the enjoyment of all and the benefit of the community.

SUMMARY: If we continue to rent for 20 years we will pay out around £240,000 at current commercial rates and have nothing to show at the end of this period. Instead, the good news is that, in purchasing our own property all monies have been retained in an investment for Walmer.

