

Responses from the Reading Room Survey

Introduction

Following the closure of the Buxted Community Hall Trust (BCHT) and in the absence of any group coming forward to revive the project for a new community hall, the parish council were keen to ensure that the parish had a venue that could be used by local groups, societies and individual parishioners. Consequently, the view of the parish council was to refurbish the Reading Room to enable it to serve as Buxted's 'Village Hall', at least for some years. As such, the parish council decided to consult with the community for ideas for achievable improvements to the Reading Room, subject to affordability.

Method

885 paper copies of the survey were printed by VR print and distributed by Royal Mail.

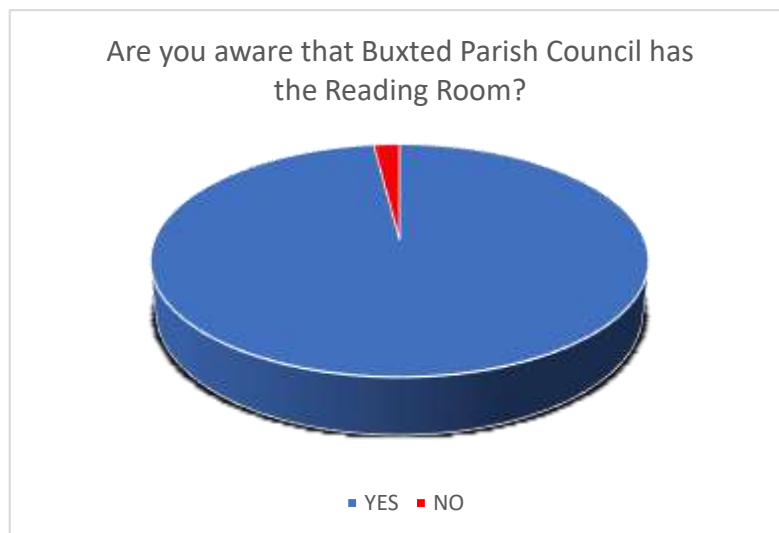
An online version of the survey was also created on Survey Monkey (SM). Links to SM were placed on the parish council website, as well as being sent out via BPEC.

72 responses were received via SM and 31 paper copies were returned to the Parish Council. Total number of responses = 103. Considering the paper copies distributed we only had a response rate of 3.5%!

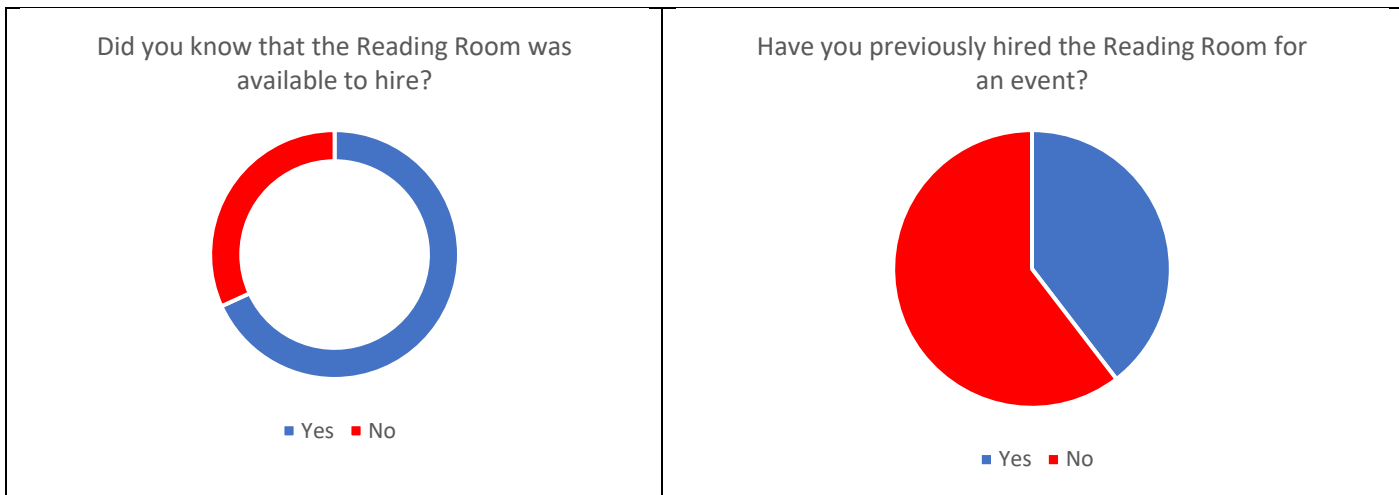
Please note – not all paper and SM responses were completed fully, with respondents skipping questions (SM) or leaving them blank on the paper form.

Regular users of the hall were also contacted to seek their opinions.

Results



98% of respondents did know that the Reading Room existed, as one would expect.

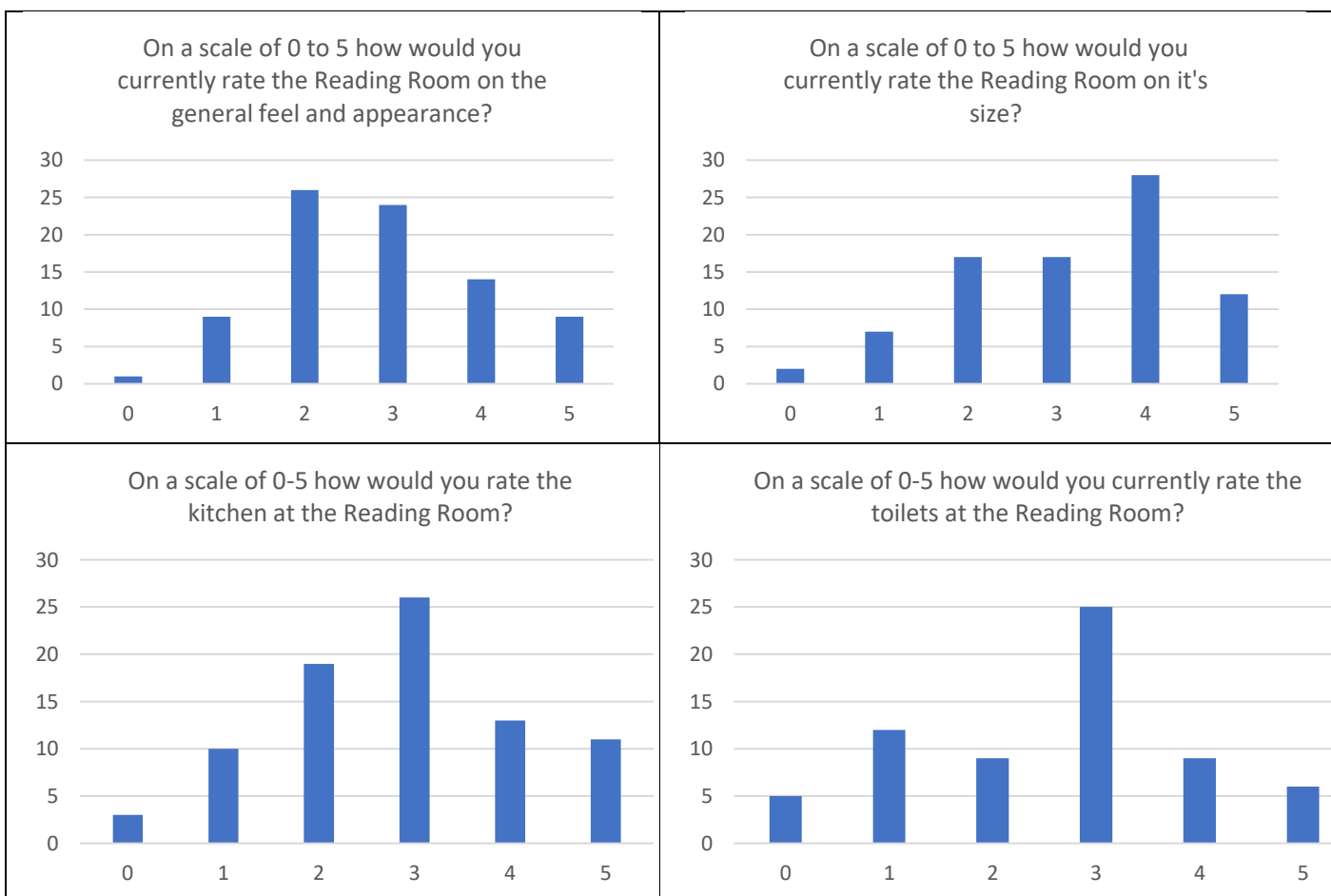


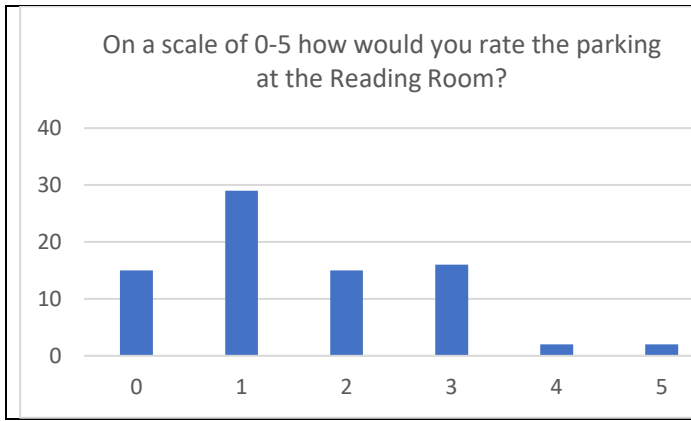
Just over two thirds of the respondents knew that the Reading Room was available to hire, although 21 of them did not know this which demonstrates that positive promotion of the Reading Rooms would be useful. 40% of the respondents had previously hired the Reading Room themselves.

Event type

From those who had previously hired the Reading Room, the events it was used from included: art exhibitions, children’s birthday parties, adults birthday parties, horticultural events, Railway lines meetings, fundraising events, jumble sales, BCHT events, dances classes, the WI, Royal British Legion meetings, training, quiz nights, amateur dramatics, bonfire society events and exercise classes.

We asked for the respondents to rate the Reading Room on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest. *Please note, not all respondents answered all questions.*



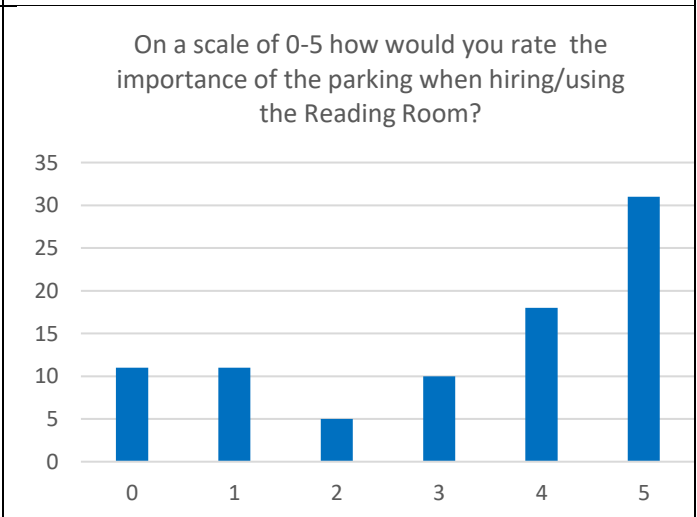
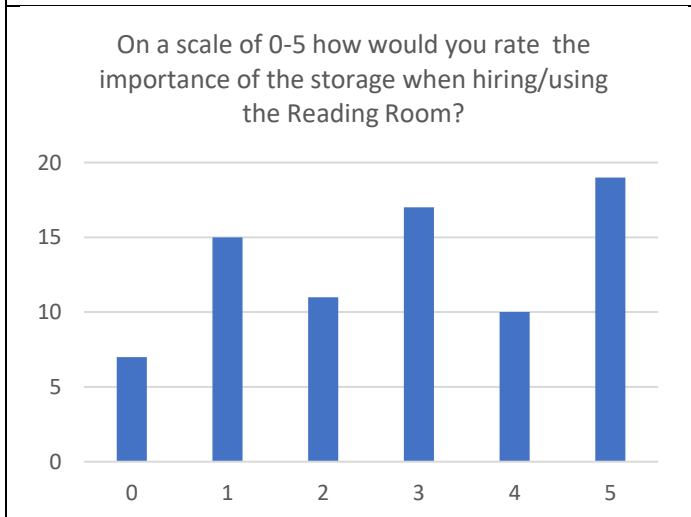
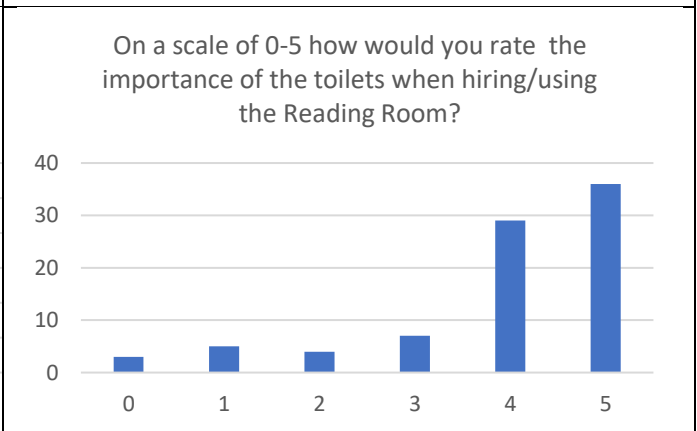
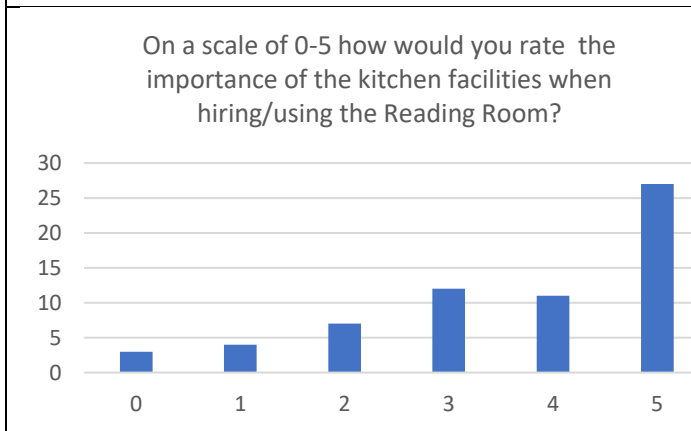
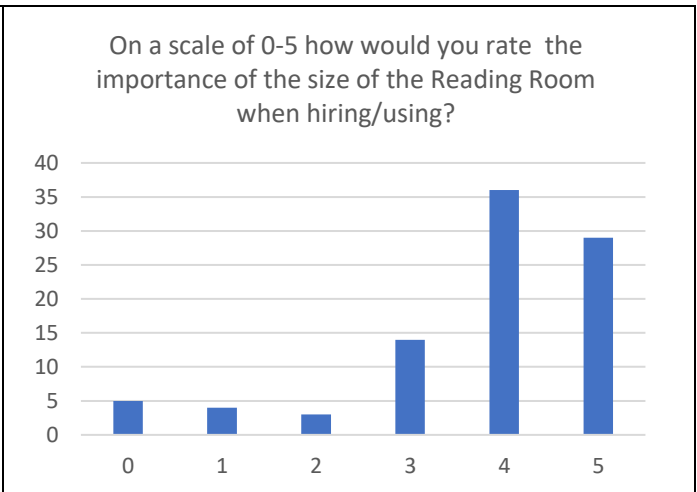
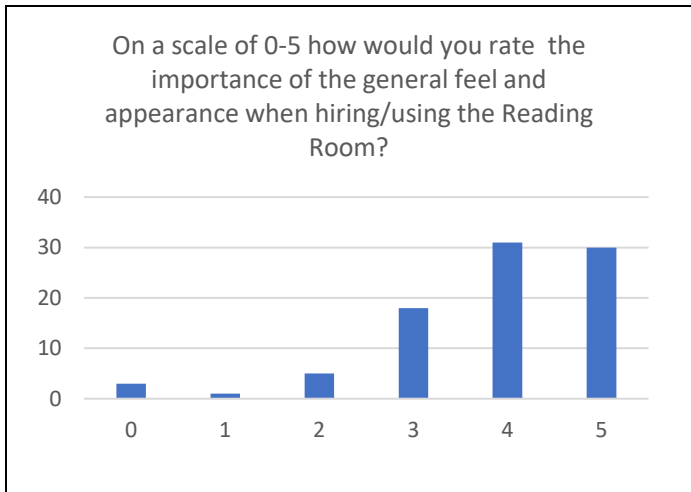


When considering the general feel and appearance only 12% of the respondents gave a score of 0 & 1, 60% scored it as 2-3.

The most popular score for the size of the Reading Room was 4, with the majority rating the size between 2-5, nothing really stood out on these results.

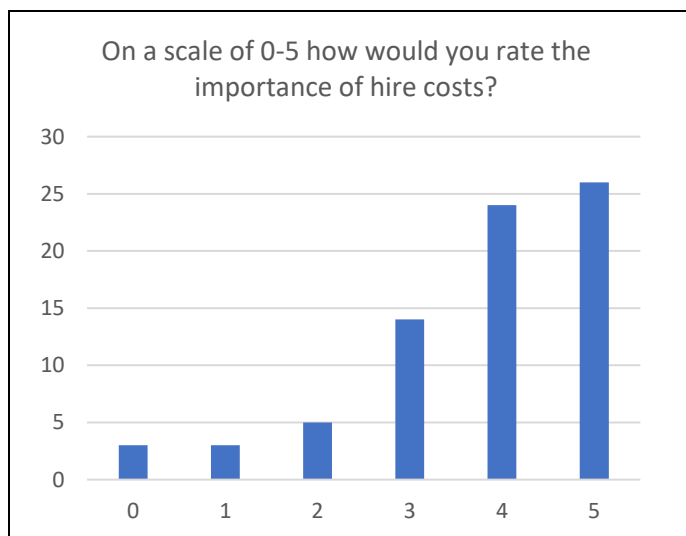
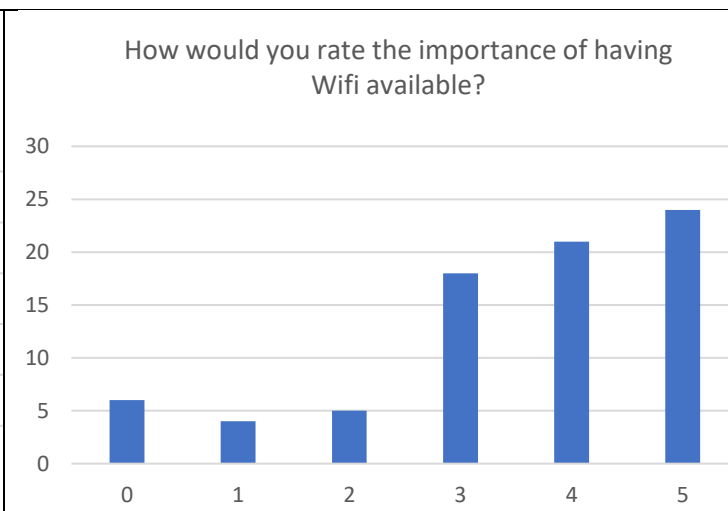
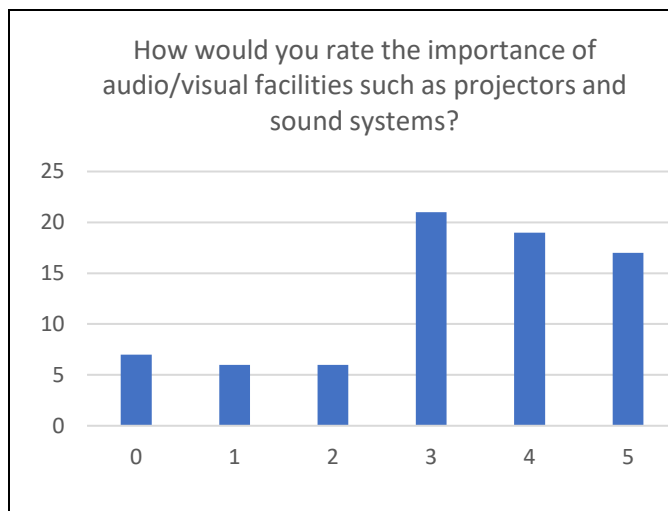
56% of the respondents rated the kitchen between 0-3 and over half of the respondents rated the toilets between 0 and 3. Only 3.8% rated the parking facilities with a 4-5 score.

We then asked respondents what they considered was important for the future of the Reading Room.



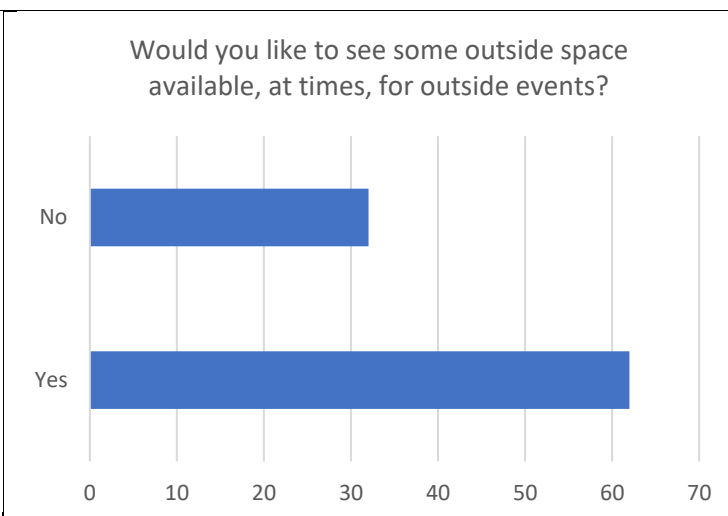
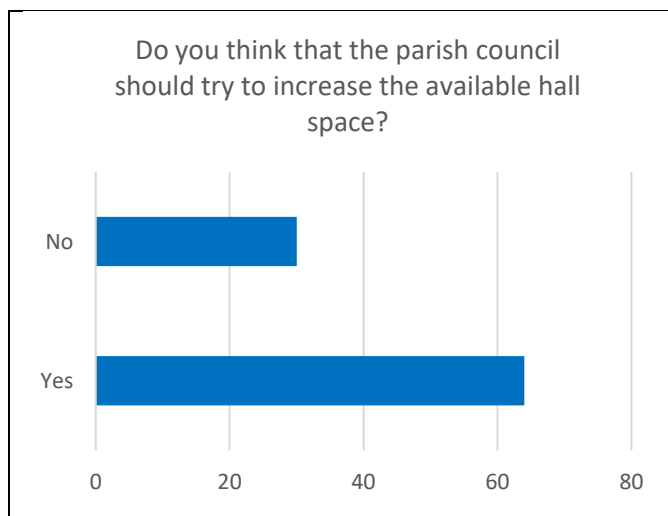
77% of respondents rated the feel/appearance and size of the Reading Room between 3-5. The kitchen scored a 5 most frequently, and the toilets most popular score was 4-5.

The importance of storage facilities seemed to have a similar response across the whole 0-5 range, and 77% rated parking facilities between 3 and 5.



It is clear to see that most would favour having audio/visual facilities as well as Wifi at The Reading Room, whilst keeping costs realistic.

Two thirds of the respondents thought it would be a good idea to increase the available space at the hall, and 60% thought it would be good to have some outside space available, at times, for outside events.



Comments and suggestions from regular hirers of the Reading Room

New male and female toilets including a disabled toilet with running hot water, soap dispensers, keep paper towels with swing bins for used towels.

A new kitchen with hot water, microwave, full size fridge with possible freezer above. Create a bar/counter between kitchen and hall with roller shutters. Constant boiling water system in replacement of kettles.

Wifi.

New double-glazed windows that can be opened, solar panels to offset electricity.

Improvements to internal doors.

A 'welcoming' lobby and ramp for the disabled.

Extend parking onto grass area by using parking mesh? Car park extension and 'sinking' bollards that can be securely controlled from the Reading Room.

A brick-built extension on left hand side of present storage area to free up the present storage area for stage side use.

Improved lighting that can be directed to different areas of the hall.

New tables and more small square tables perhaps collapsible. Consider storage trestle tables under the stage on roller system.

Noticeboards for community groups/hirers to use.

An extension that could be used as a changing room

Repaint the hall a brighter more modern colour not 1940's green and new lighter coloured curtains!

Re surface the outside parking area.

Parishioners suggested events for an improved Reading Room

Training, business meetings, toddler group, children's holiday club, after school children's club, youth groups, social club for the older generation, fitness classes including yoga, zumba and pilates, self-defence, dance shows, art shows, repair café, shows, musical recitals, local markets, coffee mornings, book club,

Suggested facilities and improvements

Improvements to the toilets, a new kitchen, increased parking to include provision for disabled and loading/unloading bay. Consideration to be given to off site parking in a nearby location or levelling of the area to the side of the Reading Room for additional parking. Improvements to the outside of the building to make it look more desirable for potential users.

Building works to open the side or rear of the building to bring in light and creating a link between the outdoors and inside spaces. Improvements to the entrance to make it more welcoming with a disabled access. Addition of changing rooms.

Soft furnishings and re decoration in a more modern colour scheme to increase appeal. Installation of a bike rack and baby changing facilities.

Online booking system and greater publicity. Website should show a gallery of photos once any refurbishment works are completed.

Comments of note

'In view that we can't have a new village hall at the moment, I think this is a great second-best option and would thoroughly support renovation to this building for the benefit of the village'. 'The Reading Room is in an ideal location, central to the village. People can walk to and from it. It is a versatile size to attract private hire. Focus on internal facilities, the outside need basic tlc. Keep the character'. 'Ultimately you have got lots of competition from other halls in the area who are bigger and have better space for private functions and parties. Although I personally

love the history, fundamentally the hall needs to decide what role it wants to play in the community. What's the goal/long term vision? It needs to be a relevant space for younger generations so that they continue the habit of using it and seek to maintain it in the future. It needs to be affordable. It should be about creating a revenue stream back into the community'

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'The Reading Room is very outdated and even the name shows this. The parking is horrendous, and this has prevented me from using it for various events. The toilets are so outdated'.

'I would use it more if it looked less like a Granny's living room'.

'Upgrade but retain character. Parking other than Church Road'.

'The hall has limited possibilities for improvement and there are numerous other community spaces in the area. The limited parking cannot be overcome. Bollards to restrict parking to hall users could be easily installed. It makes more sense to upgrade/extend Buxted pavilion and make this the prime council owned community space'.

'Would like to see retention of the stage and storage in the cellar. An additional changing room. Could the stairs to cellar be reinstated? A new main entrance with good lighting and renew the paving/tarmac'.

'Could be used for more charitable events, outside space would make it more attractable. In view that we can't have the Village Hall, I think this is a great second best option and would thoroughly support renovation to this building for the benefit of the village'.