

HAGLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Enthusiasm at public meeting

AN enthusiastic public meeting at Hagley on Monday agreed to form a Community Association, with a view to establishing a community centre on a site in the Playing Fields made available by the Parish Council.

Of an attendance of about 120 only two residents voted against the proposal, and the Steering Committee with representatives of local organisations was empowered to go ahead.

Clr. W. E. C. Stuart, Chairman of the Council, presided and emphasised that the parish meeting (which was held first) had to reach a decision one way or the other.

ONLY FUNCTION

Its only function, he said, was to consider whether to make a site available in the Playing Fields for the community centre. The project had been discussed at parish meetings, at meetings of the Council and by a number of interested people. Mr. Stuart recalled that before the branch library was built in the Playing Fields the Council suggested that it would be a good idea, knowing the wishes of a number of Hagley people, to make tentative provision for a community centre.

The Worcestershire County Council architect prepared a draft design for a library and a community centre to form a small block of buildings in one corner of the Playing Fields, and from time to time various alterations had been suggested as to the location of the centre. The Council, having considered all the suggestions, were quite clear in their own minds where the centre should be sited.

A SAFEGUARD

Mr. Stuart said the Playing Fields were originally bought by the parishioners for recreational purposes and not for any other purpose, and because of that the Council had a duty to safeguard against any move which might militate against the original wishes of the

parishioners. The Council were quite sure that if the centre was erected on the site proposed by the Council it would not interfere with the football, cricket or hockey pitches.

"It must be clearly understood," said Mr. Stuart, "that the Council will not build the centre or be responsible for it. It will be built, if the proposal is approved, by a Community Association on which the Council will be represented."

Questions were answered by the Chairman, Mr. R. H. Lewis (clerk to the Council) and Mr. William Nicholls, of West Hagley, who has drawn up plans for the proposed centre. The latter said the area of the Playing Fields was eight and a half acres, and he estimated that the proposed project would take up 2,200 square yards. A proposition by Clr. T. J. Edwards, seconded by Mrs. D. Cole, that the site be made available by the parish, was then carried.

At the public meeting which followed Clr. Edwards explained the activities of the Steering Committee, and, in dealing with the financial aspect, said the Ministry of Education could make a grant of one-third of the eventual cost to a limit of about £4,000, and Worcestershire County Council could grant about £500. However, the bulk of the money would have to be raised by public subscription and by money-raising efforts.

Hagley Community Association

A paragraph in last week's report of a meeting at Hagley, called to consider the formation of a Community Association, was rather misleading.

This stated that of an attendance of about 120 only two residents voted against the proposal, thus giving the impression that 118 voted for. In actual fact only 42 voted for the proposal, the remainder abstaining.

"SOCIAL MACHINERY"

Mr. F. J. Symonds, Chairman of the National Federation of Community Associations and Secretary of the South Staffordshire Council of Social Service, described Community Associations as "a piece of social machinery which brought all classes of people together regardless of politics and religion." He claimed that wherever associations had been formed a tremendous impact had been made in the neighbourhood.

"A new neighbourhood without a Community Association is little more than a mere collection of houses," said Mr. Symonds.

He added: "It is my experience that wherever associations have been formed the result has been the creation of a lively and active participation in local affairs."

A CHALLENGE

The main task of a Community Association was to foster a spirit of friendliness and co-operation in the neighbourhood, Mr. Symonds said. The lowest possible cost of a centre, with a minimum of requirements, was £20,000 and that constituted a challenge to the people of Hagley. The Council had made a very valuable contribution by making the site available.

THREE PHASES

Mr. Nicholls said the first phase would entail the building of the new hall which would accommodate between 250 and 300 people, a platform and other essentials. In order that separate activities could be carried on at the same time, it was proposed to have a sliding door in the main hall. In addition, provision had been made for a clinic, a waiting room which could be used for lectures and table games, a committee room, and changing rooms.

The second phase would include the removal of the temporary stage and the provision of a permanent stage and the conversion of other rooms, previously used for dual purposes, into permanent units for a specific purpose. The third phase would include a gymnasium, games stores, and a room for a warden, if thought necessary. The basic cost of the centre could vary between £13,000 and £22,000.

There was an overwhelming vote in favour of forming a Community Association, only two voting against. The decision to form an association was proposed by Mr. N. B. Jarrett and seconded by Dr. Naomi Turner.

The meeting agreed that the Steering Committee and representatives of local organisations should go ahead with plans for the centre and report to the first annual meeting to be held in the summer.