

Downton Memorial Centre Open Day 9th November 2018

Speech given by the Chairman of Downton Parish Council

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Dave Mace and I'm the Chairman of Downton Parish Council. I'm delighted to see so many of you here today. Thank you all for coming.

It is a proud moment to be able to stand before you on the opening of Downton's new Memorial Centre. After working intensely on this project for over six years now it also comes as a bit of relief for the Parish Council that this moment has finally arrived!

This project is the culmination of work that started around 10 years ago when Wiltshire Council published its plans for new housing in the county:

- 190 new homes were going to be built in Downton but Downton's Primary School and Pre-School didn't have room to cope with the influx of new families
- A potential solution was envisaged by the Parish Council:
 - Build new classrooms on the school's existing playground;
 - Provide a new school playground on part of the Memorial Gardens;
 - Extend the Memorial Hall site to provide:
 - a new Pre-School building on the ground floor;
 - new meeting rooms on the first floor for use by the whole community.
- Six years ago we started to run a series of public consultation for local residents. All of these showed a high level of support in the community for going ahead with the proposed solution.
- So, over the last six years, the Parish Council has strived to turn the ideas into reality.
- As we can see around us today, all of the elements of the proposed solution have now been fully implemented, with:
 - the new classrooms over there,
 - the new school playground over there and,
 - the final piece of the jig-saw puzzle right here, the new extension to the Memorial Hall which provides the new Pre-School facilities and the new meeting rooms.
- None of this would have happened without the hard work and skill of the many people who have been involved in the project over the years.

- I'd like to thank:
 - The Parish Council:
 - Bev Cornish, the Parish Council's Clerk, for all of her diligence and hard work over the many years of this project;
 - my fellow parish councillors, and also former councillors, for all their efforts. I'd particularly like to give a special mention to Cllrs. Keith Sutcliffe, Roger Yeates, Jane Brentor and Christine Pearce and to former councillor Peter Quarmby for all of their skill and hard work on the project.
 - I'd also like thank the providers of the funds for the new building:
 - Charles Church;
 - Wiltshire Council;
 - Cleaning Services Group;
 - Downton Cuckoo Fair;
 - ... and especially the Downton rate payers for supporting an increase in the rates to cover the remaining funding gap.
 - There are also people that I'd like to thank in relation to the Construction Project:
 - our architect (Paul Stevens) – for his excellent design of the building and his oversight of the construction project;
 - our contractors (SWH) – for the high quality of their workmanship;
 - the Memorial Hall's neighbours – for their patience and forbearance whilst their lives have been disrupted by the construction project over the last 12 months;
 - the regular users of the Memorial Hall for accepting with good grace the inevitable impacts of having building works going on around them.
 - I'd also like to thank the Pre-School trustees and management team who have been a very active and positive partner in bringing these new facilities to the community. In this regard I'd particularly like to thank former Chairperson Jen Brewin for her very positive leadership over the last couple of years.
 - ... and last, but not least, my sincere and grateful thanks go to the Memorial Hall trustees for supporting the project from the very outset. I'd especially like to thank Chairperson Susan Barnhurst-Davies and her new team of trustees that started in May this year for all of their very positive and active support for the project and for tirelessly working to ready themselves for taking on the running of the new Memorial Centre.