

The Heart Beats On

Where would you create a new Heart for our village? That's the question you can answer if you attend a meeting at Cradley School this month (January).

Since its first community gathering on August 4th, the Heart Team have been moving forward the concept of a new local café and shop. The aim is to provide a central, modern and beautiful focal point that will enable people to come together to shop, exercise, socialise, eat and drink.

The latest stage has involved creating a stand-alone project run separately from the Parish Council. This has been achieved with help from Community First and Plunkett Foundation – both of who have significant experience in supporting new community ventures. Both organisations advised that The Heart of the Village should become a Community Benefit Society - run by the community for the community. This means it will be governed by the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and will be registered with the Financial Conduct Authority.

The advantages of being a Community Benefit Society are that:

- the interests of the wider community will be prioritised over the needs of its members or investors
- it allows for community investment from as low as £10 to as high as £100,000
- voting control is vested in the members equally, not in proportion to their financial stake in the society: one member one vote
- any trade profit is distributed or reinvested for social or charitable purposes
- there will be free support with key elements such as business planning, constitutional arrangements and grant applications from Community First and Plunkett Foundation.
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The people of Cradley and the surrounding area are now key to the next stage of the project. An entirely new Heart is just one of a wide range of suggestions. Other recommendations include buying the old shop and creating a Church shop. The Heart Team are putting together a document to capture all of the different options (15 in total) including their pros and cons, so they can be looked at clearly and analytically.

The goal is to reduce the list to 3 or 4 fully costed options on which the entire community can then vote in March. And to start this critical process, an Update Meeting & Workshop has been organised for 7pm on Monday 12th January at Cradley School.

The Heart team very much hope that the event will be well supported and will give local people the opportunity to find out more, to become Heart volunteers and to help decide what would work best for the people and businesses of Cradley and the surrounding area.

To find out the very latest information check www.heartofthevillage.co.uk or facebook.com/cradleyHoV or talk to any one of the Heart of the Village Team:

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