

The Future of VBS

Following the public meeting for prayer and sharing on 10/9 and the committee meeting on 17/9, I am now in a position to update you as to our plans for VBS going forward.

Should VBS Continue?

Up to August we were struggling to know whether or not VBS should continue. Were the extreme difficulties we faced in arranging VBS this year opposition we should overcome, or a sign from God that we should stop?

We were unsure. So we placed three fleeces (as per Gideon in Judges ch. 6)

1. Finances – That VBS should have its costs fully met this year (Finances were a major problem last year).
2. Tent leaders – That a sufficient number of tent leaders should commit themselves to VBS 2014 by the end of Sept. 2013 (recruitment of tent leaders having been a major problem in 2013)
3. That we should have the right committee members to plan VBS 2014

All three conditions have been fully met.

- Finances: It looks like we could have a surplus of nearly £10,000 by the end of the financial year. The online donation facility has proved very successful, and a number of churches have committed financial support. Support from individuals was also significantly up on last year.
- A very good number of tent leaders signed up by the end of August
- For extremely good reasons, Julia Attwood our Staffing coordinator has had to step down from the committee. However, Jenny Tobbit (who was deputy staffing coordinator) has agreed to take on this lead role. Staffing is one of the most substantial planning roles for VBS. Similarly Denise Wells is stepping down after handing over the childrens applications to Pamela Mugliston last year. This is also a significant task. We will need additional staff to help with both these tasks. Judging from the response we have received so far, we are confident we should get this help. Many thanks to Julia and Denise for all their hard work

So, there was a clear and enthusiastic decision for VBS to continue.

There was then consideration of some key points as to how we run VBS.

The size of VBS

A new general policy was agreed, that the number of tents each year would be determined by defining staffing deadlines. The number of tents would be determined initially by the number of tent leaders confirmed by a given date. This would then be reviewed again based on the number of helpers confirmed at the second later deadline.

For 2014, it looks like we can plan for VBS 2014 to the same size as 2013 (this already being two tents smaller than it was in 2011) this will be reviewed at the deadlines as discussed above.

Other Decisions

Charging

Charging parents for VBS (suggested 50% of cost) is a controversial matter, with strong feelings on both sides. There was a majority on the committee that felt there was no problem with the principle of charging. There are some practical issues with charging in terms of the additional work it creates.

However, with the finances looking healthy, and with a changing committee who would have to implement it, we decided this was not the year to introduce charging. We have however accepted the principle, that if it becomes necessary in the future, there is no reason why we should not charge.

Sponsorship

We agreed to investigate sponsorship from appropriate charities in 2014 e.g. the Roundtable / carnival.

Site

Whilst we all agree that the County High is a better location, they are not able to offer us any security of tenure beyond 2015. This is primarily because of their new hall. If their plans for use of the hall during the summer come to fruition we would not be permitted to hold VBS there.

We feel it is important for us to have a secure, regular base, Newport Grammar are keen to have us, and so we have **decided to remain at Newport.**

Tents or buildings?

- We will remain in tents for the children's groups.
- However, we plan to dispense with the main marquee and hold assemblies in the **school assembly hall**. This will significantly reduce the workload, and we believe will also offer cost savings. Some practicalities need to be further investigated.
STOP PRESS – IT NOW LOOKS LIKE THE SCHOOL HALL WILL NOT BE LARGE ENOUGH, SO WE MAY HAVE TO RETAIN THE MARQUEE

Setup & Putaway

Despite trying a number of different options we have struggled for some years to get sufficient volunteers for both weekends. There are also serious concerns over health and safety and our liabilities. Therefore we have decided that the time has come to try to outsource this non-core activity. This will inevitably have quite a significant cost impact. (We expect to continue doing the small tables and chairs ourselves. This is a much more manageable task).