

Phone box refurbishment

Non-confidential

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Report to: Parish Council 06/2026

The phone box on the High Street is looking very tired and needs refurbishing.

Ownership of the phone box was transferred some years ago from BT to the Community Heartbeat Trust (<https://www.communityheartbeat.org.uk/>), a registered charity. This charity works with local communities to set up defibrillators in communities.

In late 2018 the council started the process of adopting the phone box from Community Heartbeat Trust however there were some issues with the contract and as the council did not intend to install a defibrillator (due to fund-raising for the one at the Spar already underway), this adoption was not completed. There is no formal decision evident in council minutes relating to this.

In 2019 the Parish Council funded the stained glass and in 2022 installed a solar light and shelving, even though this phone box is not one of our assets. An attempt at using it for a book swap a couple of years ago was unsuccessful due to vandalism and the damp damaging the books. Whilst it was briefly also used for hanging baskets, there was no formal plan put in place to ensure regular watering, and so this has not been replicated in subsequent years.

We have now been back in touch with Community Heartbeat Trust who have said that ownership could be transferred to the Parish Council, if desired. This would attract a £25 (plus VAT) administrative fee. They also mentioned that there could be grants available via specific companies, to refurbish old phone boxes.

The adoption process can be completed online. We have tried to obtain details of the questions asked as part of the adoption process, so that council has all the information it needs before making any decision. (Information not yet received).

We have approached BritishBits.co.uk, a phone box refurbishment company, and they have provided us with details regarding the refurbishment process, some costs and testimonials. A case study of Low Catton's refurbishment has been provided and a representative from Low Catton is happy to help talk us through the grant funding procedure. (Printed copies will be provided at the meeting).

There is no budgetary provision for any maintenance work, should the Council decide to take on ownership. Adoption of the phone box was not identified as a potential project in the current Four Year Plan.

Recommendation

Council considers what, if anything, it wants to do about the phone box, factoring in budgets and timescales.