

**Girton Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022**  
**Lexi's Café Information**

**Who are we?**

"We" are Cakes by Lexi. Lexi has been running the pop up café in the Cotton Hall since January this year and has been overwhelmed by the support and encouragement she has received from people.

So many have commented that this is exactly what the village needs and many have expressed their gratitude to us for providing it.

Of course, as in many businesses, Lexi is backed by "The Parents". I am standing up here tonight as Lexi is on holiday...we get the best jobs!

We have received such encouraging and positive feedback since opening up the café in the Cotton Hall that we would like to continue as the village café. We believe we have made a positive start and want to become a permanent part of the village community. We are limited in what we can provide at the moment due to space restrictions but we are taking on board people's requests and suggestions and will be extending our range to include more savoury items such as soups, jacket potatoes and much more.

The footfall increases weekly and there are still people coming in for the first time. We have built up a regular customer base as well as welcoming lots of new people, from the village and from further afield.

We greatly appreciate the option to hire Cotton Hall, but for a permanent arrangement there are a few obstacles. For instance, we would need a larger kitchen and be able to leave tables & chairs set out. This may not be practical, and we understand completely, as other users regularly hire the hall in the evenings and at other times, after all it is a hall for everyone to use.

**What is a Village / Community Café?**

We like to think of it as a place everyone can go to, with family, friends or alone and feel the warm welcome as you go through the door.

A place where you can eat or drink, or both, for a reasonable price and know that there is something for everybody.

A place where people can share in events such as "guest crafters days", book clubs, knitting groups or organise business meetings, birthdays and celebrations.

Over the last few months we have had customers say that the café is the only place they get to meet and talk to people. Some people just come on their own and always end up chatting to someone.

We don't want people in our village to feel lonely.

**What have we done so far?**

We have been very proactive in making the café inclusive for all. Lexi has encouraged the local schools to attend to help with social skills. She has discussed with The Gretton School quieter times to come into the café, making it a less stressful environment for students to enable them to enjoy the experience in a village social meeting place.

We provide a range of food and drinks for people with dietary requirements and are regularly trying new recipes.

We would also like to work with the Community wardens and various other groups in the village to provide somewhere that people can join together.

We would like to be a part of a "pay it forward scheme". Although Girton is considered an affluent village, there are many families that are struggling. We do not want families in our village to be hungry, or feel they cannot ask for help, and it will be difficult to encourage people to take part in such a scheme but maybe with some teamwork and communication we can start to build a place for those struggling to come to. It is not just about food, it's about companionship, feeling a part of the community, being able to join in, feeling welcomed.

## **Why are we here?**

We would like to ask the Parish Council formerly if we could work together on a project to provide our community with a permanent village café and meeting place.

Girton is an ever growing village with lots of new families moving in but there is very little to offer socially. The pavilion could, and should be the hub of the village.

We, as a village could offer far more than a café. There are community centres in surrounding villages that house local crafters, libraries, visiting speakers and so much more.

The pavilion, as it stands is not utilised much at all during the week.

We would like to propose we rent / lease a permanent space for our café Tuesday to Saturdays.

This would obviously involve some adjustments, such as a larger, workable kitchen, fit to run a business from. We would like to discuss contributing towards providing the kitchen equipment.

We would like a permanent space to set up the café, whether this be a small extension to the existing building or a separate space, there are many options.

The rent we would pay for the use of part of the building would cover, over time, the increased expenses a change of plans would incur. We are approaching you now, before the plans are finalised to hopefully have a chance of working on this project with you. We are willing to contribute towards the cost of the project and would be very happy to discuss this.

We could also approach The Girton Town Charity as it is very much a community project for the people of Girton and they may want to contribute, as this is not solely about a profit making business but opening up a centre that is available to all of Girton.

We feel it would show the Council (and possibly other organisations) in a very good light for wanting to work together with a young villager in her aims to grow her business and provide something for her own community at the same time.

The recreation ground also provides a perfect place for the children but there is very little shelter. It would be great to have a covered area for folks to sit, maybe a few tables and chairs put out during opening times, this could be anything from a roll down awning to a wooden pergola

Having the building in use would also provide access to toilets during the hours that we are open, another subject that is high on the agenda.

We realise that there is a toilet at the church, provide by GTC for anyone to use, but this is only open for as long as the church is, so providing extra access to facilities will hopefully encourage more people to use the recreation ground.

Ideas around a Community fridge have been batted about and we would be more than happy to help support this wonderful idea.

We would not, in any way, like to take anything away from the regular users, such as the football teams. We are very aware that they raise much needed funds from their tuck shop and nothing we would do would clash with that, however, by providing a place for parents to meet and have a drink and some cake it may encourage more to stay and support their children's teams.

We would also be happy to provide the hot drinks and make a yearly donation or discuss sponsorship to the teams to help towards their funds.

We would also be willing to cater for any meetings the council or other parties may have at the building.

Obviously, this will all involve much discussion and we are very happy to meet and discuss things in more detail.