

7th July 2021

Report of	Assistant Director of Communities	Author	Siobhan McLeod ☎ 07966 240457
Title	St Mark's Community Centre, Mill Road		
Wards affected	Highwoods, Mile End		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A new community centre is planned on the site of the former rugby club on Mill Road Highwoods. This report aims to serve as an update and to request Delegation of Authority for the appointment of contractors and associated suppliers to the project.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Communities for the appointment of construction contractors and associated suppliers. This will ensure the efficient and timely appointment of construction contractors and associated suppliers where relevant to ensure procurement and programme timelines are adhered to. This will enable effective delivery of the scheme.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure a seamless delivery of the programme in accordance with timelines

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Contractor decision to be made by Cabinet.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The rugby club have vacated the site on Mill Road, moving to the new site at the Northern Gateway. The existing building is part of a planning application for a large, proposed Colchester Borough Council development on Mill Road.

The existing (Council owned) building and some surrounding outside space is to be preserved to serve the local residents as a community space. However, it is not fit for purpose; the building is old, environmentally unsustainable and the structural layout needs substantial adjustment to serve as a new community centre.

The proposed development is still in the planning stages, awaiting planning approval. It is expected that, due to complex Highway requirements, there will be no possibility of a Section 106 contribution from the developer for Community Facility purposes. Anticipating this, Cabinet approved a commitment of £1.5million from Capital Programme for the project, to support either the refurbishment of the existing building or the demolition and rebuild of a new community facility.

The Diocese and new group of Trustees will manage the centre and wish it to serve the community through religious prayer as well as a variety of inclusive activities, from sport and hobbies to health and wellbeing.

A Board of Trustees has been created and a community consultation has been completed in Highwoods. Feedback from engagement with stakeholders will be integral in forming the design of the building, to ensure it answers the needs and wishes of the local people who will use it.

Amphora Trading have been commissioned to lead on the project and have appointed Suffolk -based architects Barefoot & Gilles through a tender process to lead on the design and construction of a new space. B&G have begun by investigating the economic and environmental implications of various options; demolition and new build, refurbishment, and a hybrid design incorporating the two. On 24 June the trustees announced they would like to proceed with a new-build scheme. A workshop to outline and understand their requirements from a design perspective is scheduled for the 29th June.

A Delegated Authority is requested to oversee and approve any crucial decisions through the process of the project.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Diversity requirements identified at this time.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 The project aligns with Strategic Plan Objectives '*Creating safe, healthy and active communities*', specifically building on community strengths & assets. Through its partnership with the Diocese of Chelmsford it will:

- Take an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach and work alongside communities to build a borough where people are more empowered, self-sufficient, healthy, active, happy and doing what they enjoy.

- Encourage belonging, involvement and responsibility in all Colchester's communities and neighbourhoods.
- Work with our partners to make volunteering and community involvement as easy as possible.
- Maximise developer contributions (such as Section 106) and other funding mechanisms to help fund community infrastructure.

7.2 Equally, through the focus on sustainable development on the site the project is committed to the objectives of '*Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability*'. The site will connect to the forthcoming Heat Network at the Colchester Northern Gateway as well as being designed in a sustainable manner to take into account biodiversity on the site.

8. Consultation

8.1 Due to COVID-19 restrictions, community consultation was held online. A survey was circulated in February 2021, receiving 146 responses. Responses will be shared with the appointed architects to help to inform the design stages of the project.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 As above, the council will consult with residents about the scheme in terms of both their needs and expectations in terms of long-term use and during the construction process.

9.2 The Council's communications team are supporting the project team to publicise the development of the new community facility.

9.3 Ward Councillors have been updated throughout the process and their input has been considered.

10. Financial implications

10.1 The building will be leased to the Diocese of Chelmsford and run by an appointed group of trustees comprising representative local residents, St Luke's church and Myland Community Council. Colchester Borough Council are only able to fund the initial building and development of the community centre and will not be able to financially maintain the building thereafter, therefore the trustees will be responsible for generating rental income to cover running and maintenance costs of the building.

The anticipated capital expenditure is:

Funding Source	Amount
PWLB Borrowing	£1,350,000
NHB Contribution	£150,000
Total	£1,500,000

Based on the anticipated borrowing of £1.35m the revenue implications for the cost of borrowing are detailed below. Estimates at the time of writing this report indicate that

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) interest rates of approximately 2.5% would be applicable over 50 years.

	Estimated revenue cost per year
Minimum Revenue Provision (£1.5m capital borrowed repaid in 50 equal annual instalments)	£27,000
Interest costs at 2.5%	£33,750
Total finance cost	£60,750

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 The community asset will be of great value to the Highwoods community, enabling them to have access to additional support, services, activities and groups, which may not be included in the current offering in the area. Examples of this could be virtual health services, faith groups, uniformed groups, activities and exercise such as yoga and dance. The community would gain an asset which is modern, fit for purpose and extremely inviting. It would empower communities to take ownership of a local asset, create a sense of belonging for some of our most isolated residents and strengthen community pride in the area. This facility would provide enhanced health and wellbeing opportunities, for all residents and visitors.

No community safety concerns identified.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 All health and safety compliance and regulations will be strongly adhered to during both design and construction.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 A Delegated Authority will ensure fair and informed decision-making throughout the project duration, taking into consideration the relative Council policies which promote inclusivity and opportunity to all residents in Colchester.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 We will endeavour to ensure that the development – whether a new-build or retrofitting the existing building will be undertaken as sustainably as possible within the constraints of the project budget, in line with the Council's commitment to zero carbon by 2030. We shall also be taking care to ensure that the long-term running and maintenance of the building has a low carbon impact and is sustainable.
- 14.2 The National Planning Policy Framework can be found [here](#). The definition for 'sustainable development' can be found in Section 2 of the Framework.