

TITLE	South Wokingham Community Facility Operator
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 30 January 2020
WARD	Wokingham Without;
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Wayne Smith

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To confirm Wokingham Without Parish Council as the preferred operator for the new community facility being provided as part of the necessary infrastructure for the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location. Confirmation at this stage enables the Parish Council to play an integral role in the design and delivery of the new community facility.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) approves Wokingham Without Parish Council as the preferred operator for the new community facility within the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location, subject to agreement of the terms of lease;
- 2) receives a report at a later date recommending the specific terms of formal agreement with Wokingham Without Parish Council to operate the community facility within the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the necessary infrastructure for the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location a new community facility of approximately 700sqm is required.

The Shaping Our New Communities (SONC) document was agreed by the Council in 2015 and sets out the Council's approach to the delivery of new community facilities in the borough. This established a preference for new community facilities being operated by local community organisations. This approach has been publicised widely to the town and parish councils, the voluntary sector and local faith organisations.

In July 2019, Wokingham Without Parish Council (WWPC) contacted the Council for formally express their wish to be considered as the preferred partner to design and manage the new community building. Since this time there have been discussions with WWPC on the process for delivering the new community facility and how it would be expected to operate once it is completed.

WWPC has a strong track record of successfully operating local facilities through their management of the Pinewood Centre and the St Sebastian's Memorial Hall.

BACKGROUND

Infrastructure Requirement for Community Facilities

The Council's Shaping Our New Communities (SONC) strategy established a standard of 0.117m²/capita (excluding library space) for the provision of community facilities as part of the necessary infrastructure requirement for new developments within the borough. For the South Wokingham SDL this means the provision of a facility with an overall size of 702m² based on the assumption of a total of 2500 dwellings and an average of 2.4 people per dwelling.

The SONC also outlines how these facilities need to be flexible in terms of the activities available within them so that they are able to adapt over time to meet the needs of the local community.

Selecting an Operator for a New Community Facility

The Council established its preferred option of community facilities within new developments being operated by local community organisations within the SONC strategy.

For the South Wokingham SDL, this preferred approach has been actively promoted to local town and parish councils, voluntary organisations and faith groups, as well as being publicised through the South Wokingham Forum and in local media.

The SONC also includes objectives of delivering capacity building work with local community organisations to increase their confidence and abilities in operating community facilities.

The Executive is responsible for agreeing an operator for new community facilities within the SDL's. It is expected that in making this decision the Executive would be informed of benefits of choosing one organisation over another, alongside sufficient assurances about the sustainability of the recommended operator.

The following are the information and assurances the Council would consider before taking a decision on a preferred operator for a new community facility:

- A clear overarching aim for the new centre
- An understanding of how this centre will meet the needs of the new community
- Evidence of engagement with local residents and other stakeholders
- A sound business plan and operating model
- Agreement with the Council's lease requirements

These requirements have formed the backbone of the discussions with Wokingham Without Parish Council in determining their suitability as an operator for the new community facility in South Wokingham.

BUSINESS CASE

Wokingham Without Parish Council exists to serve the community of Wokingham Without which has approximately 3,000 households. Wokingham Without is situated between the towns of Wokingham, Crowthorne and Finchampstead.

For a number of years the Parish Council has been responsible for the successful management the Pinewood Centre, situated along Old Wokingham Road. It is home to a variety of Clubs & Societies and also boasts a large adventure playground, pond, woodland walks and fitness trail.

The Pinewood Centre is owned by Wokingham Borough Council and let to Wokingham Without Parish Council. The parish council in turn sub-lets the buildings and areas of land to a wide range of community clubs and societies.

The Parish Council receives no financial support from the Borough Council (other than in the form of a low rent) and is fully responsible for maintaining and administering the site. The site is funded by the leasehold rental income and service charges generated by the sub leases, hourly rental fees from Pinewood Hall. The public elements of the site are supported by the parish precept.

Specific Elements for Clarification

When contacting the Council to express their interest in being considered as the operator for the South Wokingham Community Facility, WWPC identified a number of specific issues that they would like to explore and gain clarification on before any formal lease arrangements were confirmed. These points are summarised below:

The Community Building:

- Confirmation of the building size and footprint
- That the council would wish to ensure that the building has design merit
- That sufficient consideration is given to the parking requirement generated by the hub and other neighbouring facilities such as the school and retail units
- That further information is provided about what services the building needs to accommodate (e.g. for a Children's Centre facility)
- The proposed proximity of the community building to the green space, the school and retail units
- Further details of plans for the development of the sports hub at Grays Farm, to ensure that the two facilities complement each other.
- Options for a phased build and/or future expansion

Financial Information:

- The CIL funds available from WBC for construction and fit out of the facility
- A forecast of the future CIL funding that the parish council can expect to receive from the delivery of the SW SDL homes
- The rates payable on the building
- Any rental payable on the building to Wokingham Borough Council
- How the initial running costs might be met (particularly if delivery of the building comes early in the overall development timescale)
- Options for a principal tenant that could help support a significant proportion of the building running costs

Other Information:

- The intended timescale for completion and opening of the building and where this sits in the proposed residential occupation timescale
- What other facilities are being delivered across the site that the parish council would wish to see as part and parcel of the parishes area of responsibility on behalf of the community and which council may wish to consider co-funding.

- WWPC would seek to work with Wokingham Town Council to ensure compatibility with their facilities and needs.

These points of discussion are a positive demonstration of both the experience of WWPC in operating community facilities and their ambition to provide high quality facilities for local residents.

Potential Lease Terms

The expectation of WWPC is that any lease term would have to be looked at in light of the plans for the operation of the facilities and long term business plan. WWPC sees this as a long-term project.

WWPC may be interested in exploring opportunities for providing their own additional investment into the community facility based on the CIL income it receives.

Suitability of WWPC as an Operator for the South Wokingham Community Facility

It is clear that WWPC meets the assurances that the Council would require at this stage in the delivery of the new community facility in South Wokingham.

WWPC is a financially stable organisation that has a track record of successfully delivering and operating a large community facility.

Appointing a preferred operator at this stage enables them to be involved in the design process for the new community facility and its associated operating model.

The specific lease arrangements and other formal agreements with WWPC for the new community centre will be brought to the Executive at a later date for approval.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	Capital

Other Financial Information

The delivery of the new community facility in South Wokingham is an infrastructure requirement for the development. The community facility has the potential to be used to support other Council service delivery priorities if necessary. The specific lease arrangements and other formal agreements with WWPC for the new community centre will be brought to the Executive at a later date for approval.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
WWPC will conduct ongoing engagement activities with the local community and the Council will continue to engage with the local community through the established SDL Forums and associated communications.

Public Sector Equality Duty
An equality impact assessment will be completed on the specific proposal for the new community facility once it is developed.

List of Background Papers
Shaping Our New Communities Document (2015)

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