

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

17 JANUARY 2006

EXECUTIVE

24 JANUARY 2006

ENTERPRISE AND LEARNING CENTRE, WONFORD

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks Member support for the principle of granting a long lease of Wonford Community Hall and adjacent land to the Wonford Enterprise and Learning Trust to enable the development of an Enterprise and Learning Centre.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Wonford area is one of the most deprived areas of the city. In recognition of this, the government has invested substantial single regeneration budget funds in The Valley Regeneration Scheme (TVRS). This scheme comes to an end in 2007 and an exit strategy is currently being developed.
- 2.2 Numerous methods of community consultation, ranging from focus groups, doorstep surveys and Planning for Real events, have identified a number of local priorities. These include access to NHS Dentists, the need for a community launderette and the provision of more community activities, especially for children and young people.
- 2.3 The area has a dedicated community hall, which has been leased to Wonford Community Association for approximately 20 years. Exeter City Council supports the Association in a number of ways, ranging from officer support to providing full rent support via the Council's own grant process.

3. WONFORD ENTERPRISE AND LEARNING CENTRE PROJECT

- 3.1 The Enterprise and Learning Centre Project is currently being developed by a steering group of local residents and supported by TVRS.
- 3.2 The current Project aims to enhance and expand the services and opportunities provided from within the community hall as well as addressing those wider needs identified by the community, which are not currently being met. The steering group of the current Enterprise and Learning Centre Project proposes to establish a development trust, Wonford Enterprise and Learning Trust.
- 3.3 The Wonford Enterprise and Learning Trust would aim to be a *'community owned social business that builds on local strengths to make Wonford a more vibrant, enterprising and confident community in which to live'*. The Trust would adopt a legal structure and develop governance arrangements that would invest ownership, leadership and control of the Trust in the hands of the local community. The Trust

would also aim to become a full member of the Development Trust Association and Social Enterprise Coalition.

3.4 The Trust would aim to meet existing and wider needs by:

- Supporting the Wonford Community Association by assuming responsibility for the current Community Hall and therefore steering future strategic direction of centre service provision as well as taking on the day to day operational management duties.
- Overseeing the development and construction of a well-designed and environmentally sustainable Enterprise and Learning Centre on land adjacent to the current Community Hall (currently used as car parking). This Centre would be called the Wonford Enterprise and Learning Centre and would:
 - ❑ provide local start-up business units
 - ❑ deliver training opportunities to local residents (accredited test centre for City & Guilds)
 - ❑ develop a community launderette
 - ❑ provide access to dental services
 - ❑ support ongoing community development and capacity building initiatives in the area.

3.5 The land on which it is hoped to build is shown edged black on the attached plan no EV1044. It is owned by the City Council and part of it shown hatched currently forms part of the Wonford Sports Centre, managed for the Council by DC Leisure. Their agreement would be needed for the land to be made available. Likewise, any new lease that included the Wonford Community Hall would be subject to the agreement of the Wonford Community Association, who would need to agree terms with the Trust to allow for their continued occupation of part of the existing building. The Trust would also need to obtain planning permission for the new build element and an application is being prepared.

3.6 Under the General Disposal Consent 2003 the Council is able to dispose of certain assets at less than best consideration to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing of an area, provided the 'undervalue' does not exceed £2 million.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The estimated market value of the Community Hall and adjacent land combined let on a long lease of 125 years at a peppercorn rent is £530,000. This could form the City Council's contribution to the capital costs of the project and would represent the 'undervalue' for the purposes of the disposal.

4.2 The value of the land and the community hall could be used to lever in match funding. Total project costs are estimated to be in the region of £1,330,000 with additional match funding anticipated from the TVRS programme (Single Regeneration Budget), South West England Regional Development Agency, Adventure Capital Fund and local fund raising.

4.3 The Council will seek robust evidence that the revenue costs of the centre would be covered by income generated from it.

5. RECOMMENDED

- 1) that subject to the necessary agreement of the Wonford Community Association and DC Leisure, Scrutiny Committee – Community supports and Executive approves the principle of granting a long lease of the land and buildings identified on the attached plan no EV1044 to the Wonford Enterprise and Learning Trust at a peppercorn rent and no premium, and
- 2) that once a satisfactory business plan has been received the details of the disposal be delegated to the Head of Estates in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT

H:LP/Committee/106SCC7
5 January 2006

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:
None