

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 9 April 2024

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 23 April 2024

Report of: Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Title: Wonford Community Wellbeing Hub

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 In February 2002 Council resolved to commit funding to the works required to bring a new Wonford Community Wellbeing Hub to formal planning application.

1.2 This report updates Members on progress prior to planning and to share the businesses case and £7million costs of the project.

1.3 The business case includes significant feedback from the community and what residents value. It takes out some key barriers to exercise and includes some free use sessions for residents and clubs.

1.4 It demonstrates how Wonford could be taken from loss making to profit in the first five years.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Members note the report, extensive business case and community engagement.

2.2 That officers will bring back a report with potential funding options for £7million by April 2025.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 In February 2022 Council carried the recommendation to approve:

3.2 The provision of £750,000 funding to progress to the next Workstage of the Wonford Health & Wellbeing Hub which included undertaking of detailed investigations / surveys of the building and the development of the building design, finishes, M&E services, civil and structural designs all for submission of a planning application.

3.3 Following extensive community engagement and extensive project design works officers are now able to present the business case and preferred layout & designs, ahead of submission of the planning application.

3.4 Following an in-depth local community engagement, co-design, and feasibility phase, through investment from Council and the Live & Move (Sport England funded) programme, the Council seeks to progress the Wonford Community Hub redevelopment towards full planning consent.

3.5 In the last 24 months officers have undertaken / produced:

- A full business case (Appendix A);
- In depth co-design and engagement with Community Centre trustees and Exeter Leisure colleagues, including an options appraisal of the future management model;
- A full suite of technical investigations and surveys (structural surveys, ground investigations, utilities surveys, services surveys / searches, drainage surveys, highways assessments);
- Completion of RIBA stage 2 design and are currently progressing with the RIBA stage 3 design;
- A flythrough video of the concept design;
- Further pre planning application community engagement sessions.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 Monies already granted to council includes funding for project management capacity through external consultants, commissioning architectural and other technical input to successfully deliver planning consent. After planning external resource ceases.

4.2 Officers will continue to work with Sport England around any capital investment in the scheme.

4.3 Officers are currently reviewing all funding options.

4.4 A built facilities strategy is also currently underway, to assess need in Exeter around physical activity against existing stock. This work runs alongside the medium-term financial plan and capital asset strategy of exiting leisure stock and investment needed and revenue implications. This work is running concurrently alongside decarbonisation investment into Riverside.

4.5 Funding required to deliver the project would be brought back to elected members at Executive and Council once the above matters are fully known. Given the potential increases in costs it is recommended to do this by April 2025.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 As Members are aware, the Council has limited capital resources available. The cost of borrowing remains high (currently 5.18%) and therefore the cost of borrowing £7 million would equate to £394,000 a year. Even with the projected improvement in the direct running costs, Council would have to reduce spend elsewhere by around £150,000 a year.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 This report provides an update on progress concerning the Wonford Community Wellbeing Hub. It does not raise any legal issues at this time.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 The Sport England Local Delivery Pilot programme initially identified Wonford as a key priority to focus resources and programme delivery to improve the health and wellbeing of residents through increasing physical activity.

8.2 Initial engagement identified the existing sports centre and community facilities are not well used by residents in the local community, not connected to the local green space and often perceived as a traditional sports centre meeting the needs of people living outside of Wonford.

8.3 A 24-month programme of engagement, led by a 'Sounding Board' consisting of local members as residents, has:

- Identified a local vision for health and wellbeing in Wonford, 'What Wonford Wants' – [What Wonford Wants – This Is Wonford](http://www.thisiswonford.co.uk/what-wonford-wants) (www.thisiswonford.co.uk/what-wonford-wants).
- Co-designed the outcomes, activities and facilities that deliver improved community wellbeing through a redeveloped Wonford Community Wellbeing Hub at the existing site of the Wonford Community and Sports Centres.
- Developed a series of options on the future design and improvements to the existing buildings and facilities.
- Highlighted the need for the facility to connect with the outdoor space and further enhance and integrate outdoor activity facilities connected to the hub.
- Established the need for greater partnership working between the local GP practice 'Wonford Green Surgery' and local community assets.
- Prioritised improving facilities for sustainable travel to the site, so walking and cycling become the main modes of transport for residents using the hub. This includes connection to the Green Circle, running alongside the existing building and playing fields.

8.4 In February 2022, the Council approved the works to be undertaken through formal feasibility and in-depth community engagement towards being able to deliver a planning submission.

8.5 In the last 24 months the following programme of works has been completed:

Business Case: Project management consultants and officers from within the 'Active & Healthy People' and 'Exeter Leisure' teams have worked with technical consultants and the Wonford Community Learning Centre trustees to develop the business case for the redevelopment. This can be found at Appendix A and includes:

- Vision, purpose, scope, and background;
- Existing management and financial arrangements of current operations;
- Benefits and Outcomes;
- Proposed indicative designs;
- Future management options and revenue/cost modelling;

- Project control and programme milestones;
- Capital Cost;
- Risk Management;
- Pertinent future matters; and
- Next steps

Engagement: In addition to the detailed community engagement, surveys and feedback previously obtained to shape the facilities mix in the new hub, interaction, and involvement with a range of organisations and networks has informed the early design stages, through concept design, ready for submission of the planning application. These included specific sessions and focus groups with:

- Wonford COGs;
- the project specific Stewardship Group;
- local community groups;
- existing sports clubs and gym members;
- Wheelchair sports groups;
- Youth Groups and Primary School parents;
- Inclusive Exeter;
- Sport England;
- Community Centre Trustees;
- Leisure Centre operational team.

Surveys & Technical Investigations: Due to the refurbishment of the existing buildings (instead of complete demolition), it has been necessary to undertake a series of detailed investigations and surveys of the building, including a detailed / forensic measure of the existing buildings, a detailed condition survey & investigation of all Mechanical & Electrical installations / equipment in the buildings, structural investigations, surveys of trees and ecology locally, etc.

Design: The design has developed through the *Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Plan of Work* in Stages 1, & 2 and is currently progressing through RIBA Stage 3. These RIBA Stages have seen the collation and evaluation of detailed survey & investigation information, confirmation of the project brief, evolution & progression of the concept design, progression of the architectural design (including spatial co-ordination), and commencement of the design information required for submission of the planning application design. The outline floorplan and one of the visual designs is included below.

Forecast Capital Cost & Forecast Revenue Position: These are included in detail in the business case. In summary:

Capital forecast - A Preliminary Cost Estimate has been produced by a Professional Quantity Surveying practice. The Cost Estimate is based on the RIBA Stage 2 design and takes into account the layout of the proposed hub, the accommodation schedule, a measure of the new building works, a measure of the refurbishment works, and findings from the building surveys undertaken to date.

The total forecast cost to progress the scheme from Planning application submission to opening of the facility is £7,000,000. This is based on a current figure aligned to the

project/ construction programme below and includes inflation and contingencies as of March 2024.

Revenue Forecast – The review of existing incomes and costs (for the Community Centre & Leisure Centre), and consideration of these within the context of the new Hub (including new facilities, larger gym, etc) has resulted in the forecast first 5 years revenue position of the new hub being:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
-£237k	-£30k	£49k	£46k	£51k

This compares with a current combined revenue position for the Leisure Centre and Community Centre of circa £200k+ deficit per annum.

Indicative programme timeline if funding were available at the time of the report.

Activity	Forecast Timescale
Issue of Concept Design Report by Architect (RIBA Stage 2 report)	November 2023
Project Control Point 1: Review and approve commencement of next design stage	January 2024
Architect undertakes Developed design (RIBA Stage 3)	Jan – April 2024
Includes formal Public Engagement / Feedback session	7 th , 8 th & 9 th March 24
Project Control Point 2: Review and approve submission of Planning Application & commencement of next design stage	Mid-April – Early May 24
Architect undertakes technical design (RIBA Stage 4a) whilst awaiting the Determination of the Planning Application [including developing tender documents for contractor procurement]	May – August 2024
Project Control Point 3: Review and approve commencement of procurement exercise for contractor	Sept 2024
Procurement exercise for contractor appointment	Sept 24 – Feb 25
Project Control Point 4: Review and approve award of the Contract to the successful contractor	Feb 2025
Appoint Contractor	Feb 2025
Start on site	April 2025
Demolition and Construction Works	April 25 – April 26
Project Control Point 5: Handover	April 2026
12 months Defects Period	April 26 – April 27
Project Control Point 6: End of Defects and Project Review	April 2027

It should be noted that the above timeline is based on a seamless progression from submission of the Planning Application in May 2024, into the next stage of Technical Design. This approach (& timeline) would require funding for the project to be in place & approved by Mid-May 2024. Funding is not being requested as part of this Paper.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 The decision to approve the proposal to submit a planning application for the Wonford Community Hub programme directly impacts key council corporate strategic priorities:

- Building Great neighbourhoods;
- Promoting active and healthy lifestyles; and
- Net Zero ambition

9.2 The focus of the investment is at improving the health and wellbeing of local communities and residents and prioritising those areas of the city with the largest inequalities and poorest health outcomes.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 Lack of capital funding: Capital funding for the amount set out in Section 8 is required to progress this project beyond the Planning Application Submission stage. Without further funding approval, the project will not be delivered.

MITIGATION: ECC Officers are exploring all potential sources of funding, including national government agencies such as Sport England.

10.2 Delay in capital funding approval: Securing the funding and approvals associated with such can take many months. The programme in Section 7 is based on continuous project delivery activity. If the project is paused whilst awaiting funding, this will alter the timeline set out in Section 7.

MITIGATION: This risk is accepted, and its impact cannot be known until the point at which funding is secured / approved.

10.3 Capital Cost overrun: The actual capital costs experienced on the project are higher than the total cost forecast in Section 8 of this report.

MITIGATION: A Professional Quantity Surveying practice has been employed to provide a detailed Cost Estimate at this stage. The estimate is based on the design & works envisaged, with allowances for inflation and further contingency for unknown items. In addition, a formal Change Control Process is in place on the project. This manages & controls any potential changes in scope (& costs) during the design stage and will also manage any changes to the works (& cost) once the building contractor is appointed.

10.4 Annual Business Plan trading position is not achieved: The forecast annual trading position in Section 6.2 is not achieved and the facility is not financially sustainable. This could result in cuts to services, requirement for subsidy or even closure of the facility.

MITIGATION: Forecasts used in the business plan are based on a high level of prudence. Many of the incomes are benchmarked on current actual figures with prudent allowances for growth, whilst many costs are based on current actuals with reasonable allowances for cost increases and cost inflation. The most significant income stream – gym membership – has been subject to a separate, detailed assessment by a specialist consultant.

10.5 The benefits of the project are not realised: The expected benefits of this project are set out in Section 5.1. There is a risk the new Hub is not fully embraced by the community therefore does not improve the physical, social, mental, and emotional wellbeing of the people of Wonford & beyond.

Looking ahead, a large focus in the year leading up to opening the new facility will be on community activities, securing volunteers, arranging / organising social & wellbeing events, etc – all to build momentum and interest at the facility as soon as it opens. It will be important to launch and establish important support groups, services, and community volunteers to promote a strong community hub during the first year – which will help promote the long-term success of the hub.

Additionally, the business plan includes ‘free to use’ sessions built into the financial modelling, to help promote community use and engagement with the facility once it is open. These sessions are detailed in Section 6.2.

MITIGATION: Community Engagement on the project has been ongoing since 2019 to understand what the people of Wonford want. This has been captured in the evolved design to date.

10.6 Looking ahead, a large focus in the year leading up to opening the new facility will be on community activities, securing volunteers, arranging / organising social & wellbeing events, etc – all to build momentum and interest at the facility as soon as it opens. It will be important to launch and establish important support groups, services, and community volunteers to promote a strong community hub during the first year – which will help promote the long-term success of the hub.

10.7 Additionally, the business plan includes ‘free to use’ sessions built into the financial modelling, to help promote community use and engagement with the facility once it is open. These sessions are detailed in Section 6.2.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act’s Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people’s needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies, and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and

new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage, and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 At this stage the business case is for noting and there is no impact on the equality act. This would change significantly when a funding paper returns. The business case the decisions would be made on would require an extensive equalities report.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 Embodied carbon and construction process carbon have both been positively impacted by adopting the philosophy of 'Refurbishment & New Build' instead of the 'Complete demolition and complete new build' strategy.

12.2 In addition to keeping (& refurbishing) the significant community hall & sports hall structures, the bricks being removed during the central area demolition works will be cleaned and re-used as the brick plinth to the new build section.

12.3 The project will provide a rest stop and focal point on the Green Circle, which will provide green travel around the city (for leisure, sport, and work commute purposes).

12.4 Solar PV panels will contribute on-site produced green energy to reduce the amount of electricity being purchased & supplied into the site.

12.5 The business case is for noting at this stage and not funding.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 That members do not note the report.

13.2 That members note the report but offer an alternative motion regarding funding and timescale.

Director of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Jon-Paul Hedge

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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