

Title: Packmores Community Centre Update

Lead Officer: Bernadette Allen

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sinnott

Wards of the District directly affected: Warwick Saltisford

| Approvals required | Date | Name |
|---|-------------|---|
| Portfolio Holder | 20/05/24 | Councillor Jim Sinnott |
| Finance | 07/0/524 | Shebi Chowdry |
| Legal Services | 07/05/24 | Kathryn Tebbey |
| Chief Executive | 07/05/24 | Chris Elliott |
| Director of Climate Change | 07/05/24 | Dave Barber |
| Head of Service(s) | 07/05/24 | Lisa Barker; Marianne Rolfe; Phillip Clarke; Steve Partner |
| Section 151 Officer | 07/05/24 | Andrew Rollins |
| Monitoring Officer | 07/05/24 | Graham Leach |
| Leadership Co-ordination Group | 20/05/24 | CLlrs: Harrison; Davison; Boad; Falp; Day. |
| Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council? | Yes | |
| Contrary to Policy / Budget framework? | No | |
| Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)? | No | |
| Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)? | No | |
| Accessibility Checked? | Yes | |

Summary

This report seeks approval of the business case for the proposed new community centre for the Packmores area of Warwick and for implementation of the new steps of the scheme.

Recommendation(s)

- (1) That Cabinet supports the business case for the proposed new community centre to serve the Packmores area of Warwick as set out at Appendix 1.
 - (2) That in providing such support recommendations 2 and 3 of the February 24 Cabinet report can now be implemented.
 - (3) A progress report be presented at the beginning of the 3rd stage of the scheme as set out in the Fundraising section of the business case.
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1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 In 2007, a repurposed space in the basement of Sussex Court flats owned by Warwick District Council (WDC) opened to provide residents with access to community support services. This was initially supported by the Council's Community Development team. However, in 2015, the Council Commissioned Warwick Percy Estate Community Projects Ltd (known as The Gap) to deliver support services for residents living in the Packmores and Cape area of Warwick. The target groups were primarily older people, young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) and disadvantaged families.
- 1.2 The Gap has been responsible for delivering services within the Warwick West Area (including the Packmores) for the last eight years and the long-term purpose for the community hub is to develop a sustainable facility that supports the local community whilst also having the capacity to support those living further afield. This approach includes providing access to local services, facilitating social connections, reducing isolation, and promoting wellbeing.
- 1.3 The existing centre is much, much smaller than other Community Centres elsewhere in the district. However, despite the current size limitations, it has and continues to provide essential support services for the local community. There is, however, a need to develop new provision due to the following challenges:
 - Issues re: space and capacity
 - Building is no longer fit for purposes due to increased demand for local community support.
 - A need for outdoor space (particularly in post pandemic world and relevance of how use of green space improves wellbeing)
 - Facilities do not align with level of need in the area, particularly in comparison to newer services in other new local communities.
 - Covid recovery has the potential to increase demand for local services and adapt to new and emerging needs.
- 1.4 At its September 2023 meeting the Cabinet agreed the following:

- (1) the Packmores Project be supported in principle, and a business case will be produced for further consideration by Cabinet;
- (2) as part of the production of the Business Case, the work to identify match funding for the project, be supported;
- (3) the proposed partnership and governance arrangements for the project outlined in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (4) exploration work be undertaken, including technical surveys to assess the suitability of a site identified within or adjacent to Priory Pools Park (shown on Appendix 2 to the report) as a potential location for a new Centre for the Packmores area in Warwick; and
- (5) up to £25,000 by way of a grant to The Gap, funded from the Councils New Homes Bonus Allocations, be agreed, to carry out exploratory survey work including: Geointegrity, CCTV, drainage & condition, arboriculture, ecological appraisal, Landscape Architect, topographical, site infrastructure and utilities and tree surveys.

1.5 That report also set out the next steps for the projects as being:

Completion of the surveys.

Completion of the Business Case.

Agreement to a funding strategy.

Agreement to how the facility would be managed going forward.

1.6 At its meeting on 8th February 2024, Cabinet agreed that:

1. the general location for a new centre for the Packmores area of Warwick as shown at plan 1, Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed;
2. the creation of a Charitable Interest Organisation (CIO), be agreed, and that in principle a lease is provided on a peppercorn basis for a period of 199 years for the site illustrated on plan 1 at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the submission of, a full business case and plan;
3. the existing Service Level Agreement with the Gap is extended from July 2026 until June 2029 subject to the submission and agreement to a full business case and plan, be agreed;
4. £48,344 (+VAT) is provided as a grant for the Gap, funded from the Council's New Homes Bonus Allocation to progress the proposed Scheme to Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 3, be agreed; and

5. the high-level draft timetable at Appendix 4 to the report for progressing the scheme, be noted.
- 1.7 All the above steps, plus public consultation, would need to be undertaken before an application for planning permission could be made and before WDC was able to give formal consent as a landlord and to drawdown the rest of the allotted funds for this scheme. However, to achieve these next steps a number of issues needed a steer for and support from this Council. The February report provided that steer and support.
- 1.8 Since the February 2024 Cabinet meeting, there has been a focus on developing the business case, undertaking community consultation, and undertaking the other allied work necessary to enable a planning application to be submitted. The CIO that has been set up for the new Centre is now registered with the Charity Commission.
- 1.9 The business case is attached for Cabinet's approval at Appendix 1. This has been scrutinized by the Project Board and by WDC officers. It offers a robust and creditable case for the new Centre and how it will be run. It also sets out the basic proposition upon which a planning application will be submitted. It is proposed that it be accepted and therefore that recommendations 2 and 3 of the February 24 Cabinet report can now be implemented.
- 1.10 The business case also has an updated timetable, to be noted but it is suggested that a progress report be presented at the start of the 3rd stage of the fundraising section.

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 The Cabinet could decide against any or, all the recommendations. To do so would hinder the progression of the community facility for the Packmores community which has been waiting for many years.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 The procurement of contractors and consultants to carry out the scheme and works will need to accord with the Council's Code of Procurement Practice, in addition to any other statutory obligations. Appropriate contractual arrangements will need to be drawn up. Future reports and decisions may give rise to additional legal implications, but these will be addressed at that time.
- 3.2 A part of the site is held within the Housing Revenue Account. The Centre would be for wider community use and not provided primarily for the benefit of the Council's own tenants. If the garages are genuinely surplus and not required to meet housing purposes, it will be necessary to pass a formal resolution appropriating this parcel to the General Fund. It is suggested that this be undertaken once planning permission has been obtained when it will be clear more exactly about the land involved. Following appropriation, the General Fund would need to compensate the HRA for the value of the land transferred. A valuation will therefore be required, and it will need to be included with the scheme's overall cost.
- 3.3 In relation to the proposed lease, the Heads of Terms must be prepared. The value of the asset is important in assessing whether there is a transaction at an undervalue, given the duty on local authorities to secure best value. Such transactions must be specifically approved citing the relevant provisions in the General Disposal Consent 2003 i.e. whether the disposal at less than market value is in the interest of the economic, social, or environmental well-being of

the whole or any part of its area, or any or all person's resident or present in its area. Further, the amount of undervalue must be assessed with evidence i.e. a valuation. Provided the undervalue is £2 million or less, the Council has authority to make the decision. Above that, it must be referred to the Secretary of State.

- 3.4 In addition, the proposed terms of the lease must be assessed against subsidy control principles – to determine whether there is a subsidy and, if so, whether it is a permitted subsidy.
- 3.5 If the intention is that The Gap or future provider occupies part of the centre under a lease, the Council may wish to consider including a form of approved sub-lease as part of the head-lease to the CIO.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The contents of this specific report have no direct financial implications for the Council. As a matter of record £25k had been allocated in the 2023/24 budget to enable the development of the Packmores Community Scheme. Further provision has been made in the Community Projects Reserve for another £225k in 24/25. The £25k for 23/24 has already been drawn down as has the additional £48,344 (+VAT) needed to finance the immediate next stages of the scheme. This was funded from the £225k allocated for 2024/25.
- 4.2 It is likely that a new community centre will cost in the region of £2m. Funds will need to be raised from a range of sources including Warwickshire County Council who have indicated that such a scheme may attract funding from their Social Fabric scheme. However, to raise funding, there needs to be a clear proposition in terms of a business case and in terms of a proposed facility. This needs a site to be identified and the early stages of a RIBA scheme to illustrate what can be provided. Without this there is no scheme for which to seek funding. The business case attached to this report provides that information and the basis for now seeking planning permission.
- 4.3 The Gap's current Service Level Agreement runs to and costs £30k per annum. It was agreed to extend this by 3 years at the same annual cost which is budgeted for to provide evidence of match funding to support bids for funds.

5 Corporate Strategy

The Council's new Corporate Strategy has 3 Strategic Priorities and this proposal is assessed in relation to each one of them in turn.

- 5.1 **Delivering valued, sustainable services** – The proposal will have no direct impact on this Strategic Priority except it demonstrates how the Council can use its limited resources to deliver in resources from elsewhere to help and support its local communities.
- 5.2 **Low cost, low carbon energy across the district** – This proposal fits well with Strategic Priority 2, linked to low cost, low carbon energy across, the district. It is proposed that the new build design will find new ways to reduce energy consumption and that renewable energy generation capacity will be introduced.
- 5.3 **Creating vibrant, safe, and healthy communities of the future** – The proposal also supports Strategic Priority 3, linked to, creating vibrant, safe, and healthy communities of the future. A diverse range of community interventions, models and methods can be used to improve health and wellbeing or address the social determinants of health. Community Centres play a key role in improving the quality of community life, social support and social networks that

are major influences on individual and population health, both physically and mentally.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The proposed new centre will be designed to meet at the very least the Council's Net Zero Carbon requirements as set out in the recently adopted DPD. The Council will encourage the building though to be an exemplar. The proposed building will seek to draw on low carbon energy and as part of the site survey work it is proposed to look at renewable electricity and heating.
- 6.2 The Biodiversity Net Gain provisions will also need to be addressed as part of the scheme. Opportunities elsewhere within Priory Pools Park and other nearby open spaces will offer some degree of localised enhancement.
- 6.3 It is also anticipated that active travel to the site will be supported by examining the opportunities to improve the linkages to other open spaces and to the wider footpath and cycling network. It is also the case though that the primary geographical focus is all within walking distance of the proposed centre.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required; there are no new or significant policy changes proposed in respect of Equalities arising because of this report at this stage.

8 Data Protection

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications.

9 Health and Wellbeing

- 9.1 The provision of a new Community Centre for the Packmores area of Warwick town will provide multiple health and wellbeing benefits to the local community. These benefits are set out in some detail within the attached business case. Associated improvements to the Priory Pools Park open space will also support the local community to access free, active lifestyle opportunities.
- 9.2 The proposal accords well with the priorities of the South Warwickshire Place Partnership Board for health and well-being.

10 Risk Assessment

- 10.1 There would be a direct risk to the Council should Cabinet decide not to support the development of a new centre at the Packmores; it will adversely impact on the delivery of a more comprehensive service offer to one of the more deprived Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Warwick District.
- 10.2 There could be risks that if funding is not raised to the degree that may be needed to build a new facility, the onus may fall on the Council to fill any funding gap. This is, however, a risk that the Council takes with all its support for community schemes. In other examples, the Council has either decided that it is appropriate to fill the funding gap or to make it clear that it will contribute a specific sum and no more depending on the circumstances. The mitigation point to this risk is that the Council is not exposed to incurring further expenditure by accident.
- 10.3 There is a risk that the money expended or proposed to be expended does not lead to a successful community centre project. This is impossible to avoid at this early stage, but the mitigation is that via the project governance to constantly check that the scheme designed is purposeful, fundable, and achievable.

10.4 The Business case attached has a full risk register.

Background papers: Cabinet Reports on Packmores Centre – 20th September 2023 and 8th February 2024.

Supporting documents: None