

Title: Packmores Centre
Lead Officer: Bernadette Allen
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sinnott
Wards of the District directly affected: Warwick Saltisford

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	04.09.23	Councillor Jim Sinnott
Finance	22.08.23	Shebi Chowdry
Legal Services	25.08.23	Kathryn Tebbey
Chief Executive	10.08.23	Chris Elliott
Director of Climate Change	22.08.23	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	22.08.23	Lisa Barker
Section 151 Officer	22.08.23	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	22.08.23	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group	04.09.23	Cllrs Boad; Falp; Hales (for Cllr 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)?	Yes , Forward Plan item: 1,394 – scheduled for 20 th September 2023	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

Summary

This report seeks agreement to explore land within or adjacent to Priory Pools Park, Warwick as shown at Appendix 2 to the report, as the potential location for a new centre for the Packmores area of Warwick. The report also seeks agreement to draw down funds of up to £25,000 from the sum already allocated from the Council's budget towards the Packmores Community Centre Project for survey work of the proposed location.

Recommendation(s)

- (1) That Cabinet supports in principle the Packmores Project and agrees that a business case is produced for further consideration by Cabinet.
- (2) That Cabinet supports, as part of the production of the Business Case, the work to identify match funding for the project.
- (3) That Cabinet approves the proposed partnership and governance arrangements for the project outlined in Appendix 1.
- (4) That Cabinet agrees to undertake exploration work including technical surveys to assess the suitability of a site identified within or adjacent to Priory Pools Park (shown on Appendix 2) as a potential location for a new Centre for the Packmores area in Warwick.
- (5) That Cabinet agrees up to £25,000 by way of a grant to The Gap, funded from the Council's New Homes Bonus Allocations, 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 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 In 2005, the Packmores area was identified as an area of need by Warwick District Council. As a result, with the community consultation and plan linked to the then Sustainable Community Strategy, a proposal was included to develop a new build community centre but due to issues around availability of land and funding issues this could not be progressed.
- 1.2 However, in 2007, a repurposed space in the basement of Sussex Court Flats was opened to provide local residents with access to community support services. This was initially supported by the Council's Community Development Works. 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. The target groups were primarily older people, young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and disadvantaged families.
- 1.3 The Gap have been responsible for delivering services within the Warwick West Area (including the Packmores) for the last twelve years and the long-term aim for the community hub is to develop a sustainable facility that is supported by the local community, supporting social, health needs whilst also having the capacity to support those further afield. This includes providing access to local services, facilitating social connections, reducing isolation and promoting wellbeing.
- 1.4 The existing centre is much smaller than other Community provisions elsewhere but despite the current size limitations, it has and continues to provide essential

support services for the community. There is, however, a need to develop new provision due to the following issues:

- 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.

1.5 It has been an aspiration of The Gap to bring about a new multi-use area for the Packmores to address some of the issues outlined in paragraph 1.4 above. As a result of a presentation to the South Warwickshire Place Delivery Group on the work of The Gap in the Packmores Area, the County and District Council's offered support to The Gap to develop a Business Case for the development of a new centre. In addition, within the Packmores Area there is a challenge of location of a Polling Station where the school St Mary Immaculate Primary School has been used previously but is problematic going forward. The proposed new centre may present an opportunity to resolve the current polling station challenges for the area.

1.6 There are no other locations in the vicinity realistically to serve the community. Therefore, it is proposed to look at the fringes of Priory Pool park and adjacent WDC owned land to assess the opportunity to be used for a new centre. Both the park and the adjacent land are both WDC owned though some is Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Until more detailed surveys are done, it is not possible to be sure which land will be appropriate to propose to use.

1.7 A working group was set up in January 2023, funds were provided by the District and County for The Gap to employ a consultant to develop the business case. However, to help make progress with the Business Case specific surveys need to be undertaken to help clarify where the building exactly should be, taking account of a lot of site-specific issues bearing in mind the sensitivity of the area. This work will then feed into the business case.

1.8 To help co-ordinate the work on the Packmores Centre Project a partnership has come together to deliver the facility. It is proposed to apply a project management approach and as a result the governance arrangements for the project outlined in Appendix 1 are proposed reflecting the partnership and the need for open and transparent governance.

1.9 The next steps for the projects are:

- Completion of the surveys
- Completion of the Business Case
- Agreement to a funding strategy
- Agreement to how the facility will be managed going forward.

All of the above steps, plus public consultation, will need to be undertaken before an application for planning permission can be made and before WDC is able to give formal consent as a landlord and to drawdown the rest of the allotted funds for this scheme.

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 The Cabinet could decide not to allow the draw down of funds. This would prevent any progress being made to develop a community facility for the Packmores Community who have been waiting the development of a new centre for a number of years. The Gap would also have to continue to operate in a centre that is not fit for purpose as outlined in paragraph 1.4.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 The procurement of contractors and consultants to carry out these works and surveys 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.

4 Financial Services

- 4.1 £25k has been allocated in the 2023/24 budget to enable the development of the Packmores Community Scheme. Provision has been made for another £225k in 24/25.
- 4.2 It is likely that a new community centre will cost in the region of £1.5 to £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, in order 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.

5 Business Strategy

Currently, Warwick District Council's Fit for the Future although a new Corporate Strategy is being developed.

- 5.1 Health, Homes, Communities, the proposal is designed to encourage and not-for-profit organisations such as The Gap in developing cohesive active communities. The provision of a new centre will provide an inclusive environment and promote positive mental health and wellbeing and improve support for residents facing mental and physical health challenges and support to families.
- 5.2 Green, Clean, Safe, the proposal will increase the range of opportunities for physical activity through the use of parks, green spaces and community bases activity. It will encourage cohesive and active communities which in turn help to support and maintain lower levels of crime and ASB. This proposal will also support the Council's climate change action programme; by building awareness of the importance of the local park in helping to maintain biodiversity and remove carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere.
- 5.3 Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment, the proposal will offer the opportunity for local residents to volunteer which can lead to them developing the necessary skills to gain part time or full-time employment.
- 5.4 Effective Staff, not applicable
- 5.5 Maintain or Improve Services: Services to one of the most disadvantaged communities in our society would be enhanced by this initiative. This also ties into the County Council's approach to Levelling Up which this Council agreed with in principle earlier in the year and to what is known as a Community

Powered approach – i.e., one lead by the local community.

5.6 Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term, not applicable.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

6.1 The proposal helps to maintain biodiversity and remove carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere. The scheme will be designed to be Net Zero Carbon drawing on low carbon energy. And as part of the survey work on the site it is proposed to look at renewable electricity and heating for the new build.

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 as a result 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 will provide multiple health and wellbeing benefits to the local community.

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 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 a risk the Council takes with all of the support it has given to community schemes. In previous 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 is that the Council is not exposed to incurring further expenditure by accident.

Background papers: None.

Supporting documents: None