

Construction of a community facilities building in Cranbrook Town Centre providing flexible space for County Council services including children's, youth, and libraries

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations: That the Cabinet:

- (a) accepts the Cranbrook New Community Partners offer of a £3 million phased contribution towards the construction of a single building to provide flexible space for County Council services including children's, youth, and libraries;
- (b) accepts the offer of a single 0.4ha of serviced land in a town centre location at Cranbrook to construct the building;
- (c) agrees that a reserved matter planning application is prepared and submitted for the provision of the building;
- (d) gives approval to use up to £2 million of funds recovered from the South West Exeter Housing Infrastructure Fund grant to make up any shortfall between the developer contribution and the cost of the building;
- (e) agrees that in the event that all of the funding is not secured a further report is presented to Cabinet to consider the financial implications of providing the building.

1. Summary

This report seeks to update Cabinet on the progress of plans for the delivery of a community facilities building in Cranbrook town centre and recommend the way forward in progressing the provision of the building.

2. Background/Introduction

At its meeting on 9 October 2019 Cabinet considered Report PTE/19/38 relating to a community facilities building, and resolved:

- (a) that the proposal to deliver a community facilities building in Cranbrook town centre providing flexible space for County Council services including children's, youth, adults and libraries be approved;
- (b) that officers be empowered to renegotiate the existing planning agreement to allow the provision of an integrated building at an earlier timescale;
- (c) that authority be delegated to officers to seek sources of funding to bridge any funding gap; and
- (d) that the Membership of the new Cranbrook Strategic Delivery Board be attended by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills and one of the two Local Members.

The following link navigates to the 2019 Report

[Issue - items at meetings - Construction of a community facilities building in Cranbrook Town Centre providing flexible space for County Council services including children's, youth and libraries - Democracy in Devon](#)

Members will note the key issues from the 2019 Report which highlighted the development and future expansion of Cranbrook. By way of update, the current number of dwellings is around 2,650 with a population of about 6,230. The new Local Plan envisages 8,500 and a population of over 20,000, approximately the same size as Barnstaple and Newton Abbot. However, the provision of facilities within the town centre has stalled and it remains the case that the only building in the town centre is the public house.

The original plan for the town centre was based on a 'traditional' model with numerous retail units and food store with these being delivered by the private sector. The Cranbrook New Community Partners (NCP) is seeking to revise the approved town centre plans with a reduced commercial / retail element and provision of additional residential dwellings instead.

The ambition of the County Council was that the community facilities building would be constructed and open for use by October 2021. This ambition was not realised because the NCP were unwilling to consider separate negotiations with the County Council until it had reached agreement with the District Council on its proposed changes to the town centre.

Notwithstanding this, some progress has been made with the County Council securing outline planning permission in July 2020 on a 0.4-hectare site in the town centre.

3. Proposal

The NCP is proposing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which, if approved, would facilitate the revisions of the section 106 planning agreement. The MoU looks to agree the variation of the s106 by the:

- transfer of the land (with the outline permission) upon signing of the MoU;
- an initial contribution of circa £1million upon the signing of the MoU to be used for the design phase; and,
- the balance of the £3 million triggered by the commencement of the development of the additional residential dwellings in the town centre.
- If planning permission for the additional houses is not granted the second payment would be delayed until the occupation of the 3450th dwelling, this being the existing trigger for the construction of the library and youth building. In this event the second payment would be based on the calculated construction costs of the library and youth centre buildings, which is currently estimated by the NCP as £1,548,000.

Details of the offer letter from the NCP are attached as Appendix 1 to this report. Other aspects of the MoU include the agreement of the uses of parcels of land in the town centre; transfer of land for Town Council facilities; contribution to costs of the

Town Council offices; provision of blue lights facility land; delivery of a town square; delivery of a supermarket; and offer of town centre land for East Devon District Council to purchase to deliver commercial uses in the town centre.

Members should also note that planning applications for the expansion area have been submitted to East Devon District Council and following the planning examination, the expansion area Development Plan Document is soon to be adopted and it is likely that house building at Cranbrook will continue at pace.

If Members accept the NCP offer it is anticipated that work would restart on the preparation of a reserved matter planning application with a view to submitting the application in the autumn of 2022. It is envisaged that the building would be a well-designed two storey building facing into the town centre. As well as offering space for library, youth and children's services there is an ambition to provide flexible space for other uses such as public health nursing, hall space, meeting rooms and external multi-use games area.

Some initial work was commenced on the detailed design of the building and senior officers from the different service areas have been involved in the work. Further detailed design would be undertaken to ensure that the building will cater for the needs of the service areas as well as investigating the possibility of increasing the functionality of the building to create a flexible space that embraces future ways of working.

4. Options/Alternatives

The alternative option to the Council delivering a single integrated building is to maintain the current planning agreement which requires the construction of three separate buildings by the developers at the agreed specification at the agreed trigger points. Whilst the trigger point for the children's centre was reached the trigger point for the library and the youth facilities building is linked to the full build out of the existing permission.

5. Consultations

Consultation on the outline planning application was carried out in accordance with the statutory planning requirements (statutory consultees, members of the public and other stakeholders) and a further consultation will be carried out following the submission of the reserved matters planning application.

6. Financial Considerations

The estimated costs of the provision of the building and ancillary external works is in the region of £4.5 to £5 million. The offer from the NCP totals £3 million leaving a funding gap of £1.5 to £2 million. Members will note in the recommendation that approval is sought to use the funds recovered from the SW Exeter HIF grant to bridge the funding gap, subject to approval from Homes England.

The project will not proceed beyond the initial design stage, without all external funding being confirmed and does not require forward funding from the DCC. Should

external funding not be secured to bridge the funding gap, options will be returned for further consideration and subsequent approval.

7. Legal Considerations

The recommendation to this Report refers to the agreement of the financial offer and the transfer of the land to DCC.

8. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The design of the building would be subject to environmental analysis and the design would be mindful of climate change considerations with the building being designed to meet the Climate Emergency agenda. A single integrated building would offer betterment in terms of carbon emissions and use of natural resources.

9. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to 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.

taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

Following approval to progress the scheme, an Impact Assessment will be undertaken alongside development of detailed scheme design. This will assess the social/equality, environmental and economic impacts of the scheme in line with the County Council process.

10. Risk Management Considerations

If the offer of the contribution for the NCP is accepted the main risk is securing sufficient funds to bridge the funding gap and the risk that the funding gap may be larger than anticipated, especially if building costs continue to rise. If funding is not secured a further report will be made to Cabinet.

There is a risk that the full build out of the development will not take place and in that case the youth facility and library will not materialise.

11. Public Health Impact

The scheme would result in significant public health benefits by providing dedicated space for children's, youth, and library services. There is also an opportunity of providing flexible space for other uses such as public health nursing, hall space, meeting rooms and external multi-use games area. Being in a town centre location the building would support community interaction and active travel.

12. Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

Cranbrook is a rapidly growing town and with the planned further expansion it will be one of the biggest towns in Devon. Whilst the district and town councils have plans for the delivery of town centre facilities these remain some time off and the commercial centre is reduced in size which will result in fewer shops and other commercial facilities that were originally envisaged.

Whilst there is a funding gap it is considered that the provision of a single multi-purpose building represents the optimum way forward. The provision of an integrated flexible building aligns with the priorities of the Devon County Council Plan 2021 – 2025 and will assist in improving health and wellbeing in Cranbrook, provide opportunities for children and young people and provide appropriate support for the community of Cranbrook.

It is therefore recommended that Cabinet accept the NCP offer and agree the detailed design work and submission of a reserved matter planning application.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: Broadclyst

Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Skills: Councillor Rufus Gilbert

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for Enquiries: Mike Deaton

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Nil		

Construction of a community facilities building in Cranbrook Town Centre – Final

Appendix 1 to PTE/22/17



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28th March 2022

To whom it may concern,

10634 CRANBROOK – DCC BUILDING OFFER

The Cranbrook New Community Partners (NCP) fully support the aims of Devon County Council (DCC) in the early provision of a community facilities building in a town centre location in Cranbrook.

As you are aware the terms of the planning agreement require the NCP to deliver a children's centre of 250 square metres (or provide a financial contribution) on a 0.1 hectare plot and the trigger for this has now been reached. At the trigger point of the occupation of 3450th dwelling the agreement requires that the NCP build a library of 450 square metres on a 0.1 hectare plot and a youth centre of 480 square metres on a 0.2 hectare plot.

In order to help facilitate the construction of a single building for DCC services the NCP are willing to offer a 0.4 hectare plot of serviced land (this being the site where DCC has obtained outline planning consent) with a phased contribution of up to £3million towards the costs of the design and construction. The transfer of the 0.4 hectare parcel of land and an initial payment of circa £1million (£742,000+Indexation) would be paid to DCC upon all signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding being an agreement between the NCP, East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, Cranbrook Town Council and HDD Cranbrook Limited (the developer of the supermarket) which sets out the agreed way forward for the development of the Cranbrook town centre area. This includes an agreement between NCP and East Devon District Council for developing parcels of land in the town centre for residential development.

A second payment of circa £2million (to make a total of £3m) would be paid to DCC upon the commencement of the additional residential development in the town centre area. In the event that the additional planning permission is not forthcoming a second payment would be paid at the trigger point of the occupation of the 3450th dwelling. In this event the second payment would be based on the calculated construction costs of the existing library and the youth centre provision, which is estimated as £1,548,000 rather than the £2million payment.

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding the planning agreement would be varied to accommodate the offer to DCC.

Yours sincerely
Brookbanks Consulting Ltd

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brookbanks".