

Crawley Borough Council

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Cabinet

10th July 2013

Ifield West Community Facilities

1. Key Points

- 1.1 There is an allocation of £750,000 in the 2014/2015 capital programme to extend the community centre at Ifield West. This allocation was made subject to detailed community consultation. This consultation has now been completed and this report makes recommendations to reallocate the capital in response to the consultation findings.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to

- (1) Approve funding of up to £310,000 from the £750,000 originally allocated for the 'Ifield West Community Centre' to be utilised to fund those priorities identified through local consultation and noted in paragraph 4.1 of this report.
- (2) Authorise the balance of £440,000 from the original capital allocation to remain unallocated pending the Head of Property undertaking a viability assessment and reporting back to the Cabinet on the potential for a small mixed use development incorporating a medical practice being one of those priorities identified through local consultation and noted in paragraphs 4.3 – 4.6 of this report.

NIGEL SHEEHAN
Head of Community Services

3. Background

- 3.1 Analysis of super output area data for Ifield, indicates areas within Ifield West experience significant levels of deprivation equivalent to those of Bewbush and Broadfield. In particular, super output areas within Ifield West feature in the highest 10% in West Sussex for the following indicators Crime; Employment Deprivation; Education, Skills and Training.
- 3.2 Subject to consultation with local residents, a capital allocation within the 2014/15 capital programme is aimed at responding to those issues through the extension of the community centre. In late 2012 / early 2013, a detailed community consultation exercise was undertaken which incorporated views from over 400 residents of Ifield West. The consultation utilised a participatory appraisal approach whereby local residents were 'recruited' to help design and undertake the consultation. This approach is particularly helpful in ensuring socio economic and demographic representation, in helping to engage with relatively large numbers of residents and in helping to illicit qualitative as well as quantitative views.

Consultation Findings

- 3.4 The research team made contact 405 times with individuals during the course of the audit. The majority of responses were face-to-face interviews during which the participants provided comments relating to what they like, dislike and suggestions for improving the area. In addition to these face-to-face interviews, an online questionnaire was made available via the Council's website.
- 3.5 The weighted list of proposals for improvement is noted below along with the action progressed following the community consultation.

Comment	No. of Comments	Action / Comment
<p>Medical services required within Ifield West./ Dobbins Pond area.</p> <p>There were also a number of related comments wishing to see more community activity / greater retail provision within the Dobbins Pond area.</p>	91	<p>The nearest GP Surgeries are Langley Corner Surgery and Lady Margaret's Road (1.5 miles and 1.4 miles respectively from Dobbins Pond) A priority for many residents is the provision of a GP / health facility locally. Viability of the medical provision is dependent upon NHS West Sussex and a local surgery commitment. Initial consultation with the Langley Corner Surgery, indicated that there is interest in extending provision into Ifield West, albeit on a part time basis.</p> <p>Alongside the desire to see medical provision, there were a number of related comments wishing to see more retail provision within the locality. Some of these comments were specific in nature (i.e. chemist or take away) and others were more generic (i.e. more activity, greater diversity of shopping in the area).</p> <p>Typically, the development of a medical facility and / or retail units would be facilitated (rather than directly developed) by the Council. It is recommended that the options to test the</p>

		viability and take forward a combined medical and / or a small scale retail provision are progressed as set out in paragraph 4.3 – 4.6 of this report.
Make the Dobbins Pond area more useable for residents to enjoy as an amenity / recreational space.	73	Costs obtained to repair discharge channel, clear weeds, surface the path around the outside of the pond and provide picnic benches. Proposed this forms part of capital project
Astroturf and Floodlight the kick-a-bout	36	This was the preference for the majority of young people responding. Costs obtained and proposed to form part of the capital project.
Increase the hall sizes available at the community centre	9	The cost of increasing the size of the community centre halls would be significant. Given that this received relatively little support, it is proposed that this is not taken forward.
Provide an outside area at the community centre	5	Although the number of comments received was relatively small, these were from parents at the Playgroup operating at the community centre. (Operates Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday). With regular attendance of 38, the benefit of this would be greater than the numbers responding and the cost of a solution is relatively low. Therefore, costs obtained and proposed this forms part of capital project.

3.6 Alongside responses which are linked with proposed capital investment, respondents identified a number of related priorities / issues of concern. For information, these are noted in Appendix 1 along with the action taken by the Project Group.

4. Proposal

4.1 If the Council are to respond to those issues set out in Section 3.5 above, it is apparent that potential capital investment falls into one of two categories.

- 1) Items to be progressed through the Borough Council capital utilisation programme identified in this report, or
- 2) Items to be progressed in partnership with a developer

4.2 Items to be progressed through the Borough Council capital utilisation programme identified in this report:

Reflecting resident priorities, it is recommended that a local improvement scheme consisting of the following be developed:

- (i) improve Dobbins Pond and the surrounding locality,
- (ii) upgrade the surface of the children's kickabout area
- (iii) provide a secure external area for users of the community centre.

Costs have been obtained for these work and a capital budget of up to £310,000* is required to deliver these.

* Within the allocation of £310,000, the single most costly item would be removal of silt from Dobbins Pond with a potential cost of £132,000. The impact and cost benefit of removing the silt from the Pond is currently being evaluated via habitat and silt surveys. It is recommended that the decision regarding silt removal is deferred until the survey work is completed. It is further recommended that providing the cost is within the budget sum of £132,000, the decision as to whether silt is removed is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture.

4.3 Items to be progressed in partnership with a developer.

The potential for a medical facility to serve Ifield West through a mixed use development.

4.4 Subject to a viability assessment it is proposed that the Head of Property examines the potential to work in partnership with a developer to deliver additional retail units incorporating provision of a medical facility to serve Ifield West. It is proposed that any units could be flexibly designed to accommodate a variety of retail uses including the medical facility identified to the local consultation and mentioned in paragraph 4.1 of this report. Rather than build a potentially-expensive stand-alone medical facility, any such use could be accommodated in one of these retail units thereby reducing costs and limiting risk. Should the proposed medical use at any point cease, the unit could be re-let for retail.

4.5 Initial viability work has been undertaken to assess whether 2-3 small retail units could be developed on the land immediately adjoining the eastern boundary of the existing Tesco. Early indications suggest that a scheme may be deliverable if suitable occupiers can be found and that there could be scope to include a small number of residential units within such a scheme if it can aid viability.

4.6 The balance of £440,000 from the original capital allocation of £750,000 could potentially be allocated to this scheme to aid viability / facilitate a return for the Council. It is recommended that consideration is given to this allocation as part of the initial viability assessment. To progress this, an indicative scheme is to be designed and valued with a view to ascertaining the most suitable delivery mechanism

5. **Ward Members' Views**

5.1 Ifield Ward Members have been actively involved throughout the project and are supportive of the proposals.

6. **Staffing, Equalities, Financial and Legal Implications/Powers**

Financial Implications

- 6.1 The capital program included budget provision of £750,000 for the Ifield Life Centre scheme. Cabinet approval is required to redirect £310,000 of this provision to fund the proposals identified in Section 4 of this report.
- 6.2 Any on going revenue effects will be contained within the existing budget provision for Community Services.
- 6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed

Legal Implications

- 6.4 So long as the balance of £440,000 from the original capital allocation remains unallocated there are only legal limited implications. In the event of the further report from the Head of Property recommending a mixed use development as proposed in paragraph 4.2 above there will be a number of legal issues to be identified and resolved in that report.

7. Risk Implications

- 7.1 Risk analysis and mitigation has formed part of the on going work of the Project Team. The project proposals are based upon the priorities expressed by residents and within this context, the potential for risk to the Council's reputation is perceived as low. The main commercial risk is the letting of the retail / medical units. An initial viability assessment will test the market potential to develop this scheme and it is anticipated that the development would progress in partnership with a developer to mitigate the Council's risk exposure.

8. Environmental Impacts

- 8.1 The proposal to clear the duckweed from Dobbins Pond has been designed to provide a natural and sustainable solution. Ensuring the outflow from the pond is repaired and effective will enable the pond to be utilised as a more attractive local resource.

9. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 9.1 The recommendations will facilitate a response to the deprivation issues highlighted in the original business case with a more targeted use of resources focussed on the issues of most significance for local residents.

10 Background Papers

- 10.1 Report of Ifield West Community Consultation (February 2013).

Contact Officer:- Nigel Sheehan, Head of Community Services
Direct Line:- 01293 438728

Appendix 1

Ifield West Community Consultation

Summary of Wider Issues and Action Taken

Comment	No. of Comments	Action / Comment
Repair roads and pavements	101	Referral to West Sussex CC along with details of specific issues raised. Highways Officer to attend resident forum meeting in July specifically to discuss these issues.
Create a forum so people can have their say on local issues	86	A first Forum meeting was held in March 2013 and was attended by 40 residents.
Provide a youth club	86	Although this received relatively high support, this was primarily adults who made this comment. The preference / priority for young people was to resurface the kickabout area to make this more useable. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that this matter if referred to the Forum for consideration and action.
Install speed calming measures on Hyde Drive	82	Has been nominated for consideration of funding through the Community Initiatives Fund. (WSCC).
Cut back overgrown hedges along pavements. It was noted that parents with buggies / wheelchair users needed to use the road rather than the footpath.	73	Legal Services / Amenity Services confirming ownership and responsibility for this area with WSCC.
Community events so people can get to know their neighbours.	82	To be referred to the resident's forum for suggestions / action.
Councilor surgeries so residents can contact their councilor	56	Two surgeries have now taken place and Members are working with the new forum to maximise community engagement.
PayPoint at Tesco (This would enable residents to top up their gas and electric cards locally rather than making a trip into Ifield or the town centre).	46	Letter sent to Tesco to consider providing this service. Tesco has reviewed their policy and confirmed they will introduce this facility at their Ifield West store. Data lines currently being installed.
More community events at the community centre	44	To be referred to the resident's forum for consideration / action.
Provide email briefings to keep	42	As a pilot, a first briefing was issued in

people informed about local issues		April. 142 residents signed up as recipients.
Clear litter from the residential streets in the area	38	Referral to Amenity Services