

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET****DATE: 25 JULY 2023**

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: DENISE TURNER-STEWART, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

LEAD OFFICER: MARIE SNELLING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES

SUBJECT: YOUR FUND SURREY- CF265 ASHFORD COMMUNITY BUILDING

ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

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Purpose of the Report:

This report sets out the key information on the Ashford Community Building Your Fund Surrey (YFS) application, for the consideration of Cabinet.

The vision of YFS is to bring community-led and place-making projects to life, with a focus on the wider community benefit that leaves a real legacy.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the full amount requested of £899,645, (76% of total project cost), comprised of:
 - Up to £899,645 of capital funding towards the construction of a community building to be paid in staged payments, on evidence of spend.
 - 5% of which will be retained as final payment until final evidence of income, expenditure and building control sign-off is provided.

Reason for Recommendations:

- This application has been the subject of a rigorous assessment process and officers consider the project meets the aims and published criteria of the Fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding.
- The project will provide a much-needed community building supporting one of Surrey County Council's most deprived neighbourhoods, Stanwell. There are very few facilities currently in the area, so the new community building will enhance the neighbourhood and provide many opportunities for the residents as there has been considerable interest in using the new facility.

Executive Summary

1. Ashford Community Building is an application made by 8th Ashford Scouts, the largest scout group in Spelthorne. They have been part of the community since 1945 providing opportunities for local children to experience outdoor activities and develop the life skills needed to become responsible members of the community.
2. Their current building on Convent Road, Ashford is a wartime barracks hut and is not fit for purpose. The lease on the land has expired and they could be asked to vacate at any time. As a result, the group began seeking alternative accommodation 10 years ago within the group's Ashford catchment area.
3. This YFS application is for a new purpose-built building, with a variety of different sized spaces which will appeal to a broad number of users. It will have one main hall, a kitchen, storage area and two smaller meeting rooms. The new community building will provide affordable facilities for a variety of groups and the wider community as well as meeting the current increasing demand for scouts, cubs and beavers in the area.

Project Summary

4. 8th Ashford Scouts are being displaced from their existing facilities and are looking for funding for a community building at their new site at Woodthorpe Road, Ashford, supporting a number of key neighbourhoods. The location is 0.5 miles from Ashford Station with residents being able to access the site on foot, bicycle, car or by train.

Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)	Spelthorne 003E
National Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	6 (one is most deprived)
Surrey Index of Multiple Deprivation	2 (one is most deprived)
Neighbouring LSOAs	The community building will serve residents from across the district including one of Surrey County Council's identified key neighbourhoods: 11655 - Ashford North & Stanwell South. Further neighbouring LSOAs in Surrey Decile 1 are: 10099 Ashford East 11885 & 12737 Staines South

5. 8th Ashford Scouts are committed to ensuring the building is used by the wide community. They have received over fifty expressions of interest from potential user groups varying in age, gender, ethnicity and physical abilities. The significant level of interest provides an indication on the level of need, and lack of current facilities, in the local area.
6. 8th Ashford Scouts have received funding from Spelthorne Borough Council's Community Infrastructure Levy to install bike racks outside the venue and to become a drop off point for The Bike Project. The Bike Project charity receives second hand bikes which they then fix and donate to refugees and people seeking asylum.

7. A proposed usage plan for the spaces has been. 8th Ashford Scouts' activities equates to approximately 9 hours of use per week with one Saturday a month dedicated to district events with other groups or extra programme activities. The remaining time will be dedicated to community use, with priority being given to registered charities and not-for-profit groups. 8th Ashford Scouts have devised four differential rates depending on the hirers status. The prices were developed by benchmarking against other community halls in Surrey and will be reviewed annually. Any profits will be used for a maintenance fund in anticipation of future repairs or upgrades.
8. To ensure the efficient running of the Community Building, the Scouts have identified a need for a role which would oversee and update the centre's calendar and programming of activities. 8th Ashford Scouts were previously successful in getting to the last stage of funding of The National Lottery Community Fund for a Community Outreach Manager in 2020. The funding stream was withdrawn due to the Covid pandemic, however the Scouts were told that a future application would be looked on favourably. The role would be responsible for ensuring that the Ashford Community Building is well utilised by a diverse range of groups from across the community, and for the day-to-day management of the building. In the interim, this role would be fulfilled by a team of volunteers guided by the Executive Committee.
9. The group are currently finalising a 60-year lease on land owned by Ashford Sports Club. Ashford Sports Club lease the land to WR Sports Club, who will sublease it to 8th Ashford Scouts. Both the sublease and the headlease are for 60 years so we would be unable to extend the lease beyond that.
10. WR Sports Club were awarded £300,000 from Your Fund Surrey to increase the size of the indoor space available to better provide services for members and non-members. Careful consideration was taken before progressing this application in view of their close proximity to each other. Officers agreed that the community benefits and target audience of both projects were different, and the project should be progressed to Advisory Panel, especially given the high level of need in the area and its proximity to highly deprived areas.
11. 8th Ashford Scouts will be open from 8.30am-9.30pm each day and have placed a particular emphasis on the facilities being used for charity and community groups rather than for private parties and functions. The groups identified who they would particularly like to support are children, women and girls, people with learning disabilities, asylum seekers and refugees, and those experiencing poor mental health.
12. WR Sports has amended its constitution to state there will be a named representative of 8th Ashford on its board. Likewise, 8th Ashford will be amending their constitution to state that one or more representative(s) from WR Sports can join their Executive Committee. The parties have agreed on shared objectives to maximise usage of both facilities.
13. 8th Ashford Scouts place emphasis on the building being sustainable. Included within the building, but not limited to, will be a high level of insulation, an Air Source Heat Pump, LED lighting and solar panels.

Description of project benefits

The key benefits of the project include:

- i. Meeting SCC ambition of 'Nobody Left Behind' by providing support in a Key Neighbourhood
- ii. Offering a new community space with opportunities to enhance social interaction
- iii. Increased capacity for local Scouts, Beavers, Cub sessions

- iv. Improve the local economy through increased skills and volunteering opportunities.
- v. Creating a new environmentally friendly and accessible building with low running costs

Project Timeframes and Management

- 14. The project will take approximately 36 weeks. Planning permission was granted in 2021. The new building will have an expected minimum life expectancy of 50 years, however on-going maintenance has the potential to extend the lifespan.
- 15. Under guidance of the Executive Committee, the 8th Ashford New Building Task Force will have overall responsibility for the management and maintenance of the facility.
- 16. 8th Ashford Scouts have been given considerable support from several professionals during the development of the project. This includes legal advice from White & Case and financial advice from Community Foundation Surrey.

Consultation:

Summary of Support

- 17. Have Your Say, which featured the 8th Ashford Scouts Community Building, received 358 comments. Almost 100% of comments were positive of the project with many residents saying it is a well-needed community resource.
- 18. Letters of support have been received from a range of organisations, groups, individuals and County Councillors.
- 19. The Divisional Councillor, Cllr Denise Turner-Stewart commented as follows:

'This much needed facility will provide a wide range of opportunities for our communities in Spelthorne, but particularly Ashford and Stanwell. There is a high need for constructive and structured activity for young people in the Ashford area and the location for the new site sits between Ashford North, one of the top areas of deprivation on the Surrey index and Staines South which is an area with a high level of social housing and with many residents on low incomes.

This is a popular and well run Scout Group which provides affordable activities where young people learn essential practical and social skills to prepare them for adulthood. Access is provided to outdoor activities which would be difficult to access for low income families and which are subsidised to enable families to benefit from the extensive programme of outdoor provision. This provision will be developed further with the increased uptake that will arise from the new Facility.

The new hut will be used by charities and not for profit community groups in the local area with a focus, in particular, on supporting community health and wellbeing and reducing social isolation. The facility will be available for all age groups including those supporting new mothers, the elderly, refugees and asylum seekers and community groups will be providing a wide range of activities which are not currently available in the Ashford, Staines and Stanwell areas. There is a large sheltered housing complex nearby and the residents would benefit from the wide range of supportive activities which will be delivered from this community building.

This scout group is very well run and is supported by a strong volunteer base and the group has taken out extensive research to identify the volunteer and community groups who will be able to deliver their varied sessions in the local area, providing support to address local

need. The scout group have made a good case for the need for support for provision of this community facility. In my capacity as divisional Member, I fully support this application and I am very keen to see the application progressed to enable the Scout Group to continue and expand their outstanding work, contributing to the development of our young people in Spelthorne in an area of high population density, in close proximity to vulnerable groups and with limited outdoor space and very high local demand for community activities, support and provision.

This new scout hut will be an asset to the community and will provide a welcoming and accessible space for all ages to enjoy, strengthening and benefitting the community for many years to come.'

Risk Management and Implications:

20. This table below outlines the key risks to the project. Officers consider there to be adequate control measures in place.

Summary Table of Risks and Key Mitigations

Risk description	RAG	Mitigation action/strategy
The sub-lease between WR Sports & 8 th Ashford Scouts has a 4-year break clause	Yellow	8 th Ashford Scouts have been running since 1945 and are established in the community. The Scouts have limited the circumstances to which they can use the break to only if there are financial difficulties for the scouts. Finance have assessed the Scouts financial stability and this risk has been accepted after confirmation from Land & Property. A condition within the funding agreement would be to review final head-lease and sub-lease before any funding is released
Post award project costs rise significantly, and the build is no longer viable	Yellow	Ensure 8 th Ashford Scouts are working closely with contractor to ensure best value on the project. Project costs include a 10% contingency, and the Scouts have further fundraising potential if needed
Lack of community use in new building	Green	The Scouts have planned publicity through local media/social media sites. They have strong existing connections with community groups with expressions of interest already over capacity.
Weak management committee/lack of volunteers	Green	Very clear constitution. Management group well established and experienced
8 th Ashford Scouts sell the venue	Green	Consider the inclusion of a condition on funding that 8 th Ashford Scout add a restriction to the title to ensure they cannot sell for a set number of years

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

21. YFS funding is requested for the construction of the community building. The application for £899,645 equates to 76% of the overall project costs. Table 1. Financial Summary details the £284,484 of other funding which has been secured. A further £45,000 is pending. The total project cost is £1,184,129 and Table 2 details the total project cost breakdown.

Table 1. Financial summary

Amount applied for:	£899,645
Total project cost:	£1,184,129
Percentage of cost against total:	76%
Have other funding sources been secured?	Yes
Other funding:	<p>Actual 8th Ashford Scouts - £170,699 Garfield Weston - £30,000 St Faith's Trust - £50,000 Spelthorne CIL - £9,484 (Cycle rack for the bike project) Various funders - £24,301 Total - £284,484</p> <p>*In progress Heathrow Community Trust - £15,000 Clothworkers Foundation - £20,000 Bernard Sunley - £10,000 Total - £45,000 <i>*If this funding was approved, their bid to YFS would reduce to £854,645</i></p>
Is there a commercial element to the project?	Yes
Amount suggested for funding:	£899,645

Table 2. Project Cost breakdown:

Activity	Total Cost (inc. VAT)
Construction of the new building	£964,187*
Decorating	£2,200
Electricity	£46,782
Cycle rack	£9,484
Gravel for pathway	£2,500
Equipment & materials	£28,976
Professional fees – quantity surveyor	£10,000
Evaluation (2%) - YFS requirement	£20,000
Sub total	£1,084,129
Contingency (10%)	£100,000*
Total	£1,184,129

*Denotes YFS funded element

Advisory Panel Comments

22. The applicant presented the project to the Advisory Panel on 14th June 2023. Panel Members recognised the project was in, and serves, an area of need within the County.
23. Panel members queried how the applicant was going to manage the bookings if they didn't receive funding for the Community Outreach Manager. Further queries were

raised on the number of hours per week the scouts would use the facilities and what community use would be made available.

24. The Panel were satisfied with responses given. Four out of five Members who attended agreed that the project should be recommended for funding. One member declared an interest and withdrew from the discussion.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:

25. Significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the Council's financial resilience and the financial management capabilities across the organisation. Whilst this has built a stronger financial base from which to deliver our services, the increased cost of living, global financial uncertainty, high inflation and government policy changes mean we continue to face challenges to our financial position. This requires an increased focus on financial management to protect service delivery, a continuation of the need to be forward looking in the medium term, as well as the delivery of the efficiencies to achieve a balanced budget position each year.
26. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2023/24 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority, in order to ensure the stable provision of services in the medium term.
27. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports this application. This project has been reviewed and initial questions about the costings have all been addressed. There is lower investment from other parties into the project (YFS are funding 76% of the project cost). This places more risk on YFS however, the delivery of the project appears to be adequately planned financially and the investment should provide community benefit and financial return, to enable the organisation to maintain the new premises in the long term.
28. The borrowing costs associated with the fund have been fully built into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The annual cost of borrowing for this specific project of £899,645, would be £52,430.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

29. The report sets out the information and steps for the consideration of the application further to the Council's governance arrangements for Your Fund Surrey.
30. Further to those arrangements, if approved, the Council and the organisation will enter into a comprehensive funding agreement which will include the performance measures that will be put in place to ensure the funding is used as intended as well as clearly describing any support or additional conditions agreed as part of the funding award.
31. It is recommended that SCC Require a restriction on the title to prevent sale of the property or change of use without SCC permission and require pay back should the building be sold or not used for the intended purpose, on a sliding scale. The final terms to be agreed by the Executive Director.

Equalities and Diversity:

32. Your Fund is designed to provide investment in schemes that encourage community participation, reduce isolation, and develop the potential for social wellbeing and economic prosperity. As such it is anticipated that this project will have a positive impact on a number of those who may rely on or gain support from within the local community and those within protected characteristics that may be more likely to experience social and economic exclusion.

Other Implications:

33. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Implications for council priorities and policy areas

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No direct implications
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children & adults	Provides a safe space for vulnerable children and adults attending sessions with charities
Environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The building will be sustainable, including environmental features such as air source heat pump, LED lighting, solar panels and insulation.Reduction in journeys and encouragement of more sustainable forms of travel through EV charging points and cycle parking
Public Health	The project will have a positive impact on wider health determinants with reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">signposting to servicesclose work with local charitiesenhance social cohesion and wellbeing in an area of deprivation

What Happens Next:

- Following Cabinet approval of the funding a notice of the records of decisions taken under delegated power, will be published within 3 days of the decision being made.
- Officers will prepare the relevant schedules and funding agreements to enable payment of funds and monitoring and evaluation of the project against its outcomes.
- The YFS Team officers will issue a provisional offer of funding to the applicant requiring review of the tender before the final value of YFS funding is confirmed and a funding agreement drafted.

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Consulted:

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Sources/background papers:

Your Fund Surrey Criteria

Your Fund Surrey Governance Document

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