

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

DATE: 23 APRIL 2024



REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: DENISE TURNER-STEWART – DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES

LEAD OFFICER: MICHAEL COUGHLIN - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS, DIGITAL & TRANSFORMATION

SUBJECT: YOUR FUND SURREY APPLICATION – ASH VALE COMMUNITY WELLBEING MEETING PLACE AND NEW SCOUT HEADQUARTERS

ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: EMPOWERED AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Purpose of the Report:

This report sets out the key information on the ASH VALE **COMMUNITY WELLBEING MEETING PLACE AND NEW SCOUT HEADQUARTERS**, Your Fund Surrey (YFS) application for the consideration of the Cabinet.

The vision of YFS is to bring community-led and place-making projects to life, with a focus on wider community benefit that leaves a real legacy. YFS helps Surrey County Council (SCC) meet its priority to support empowered and thriving communities and tackle inequality to ensure that no one is left behind.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. **Agrees to fund project CF259 for the full amount requested of £606,443 comprised of:**
 - **£606,443 of capital funding towards the development of the new building, outside area and bicycle storage to be paid in staged payments, on evidence of spend**
 - **Including 5% to be held by SCC until final evidence is provided of income and expenditure, evaluation and completion (such as building control sign-off).**

Reason for Recommendations:

This application has been the subject of a rigorous assessment process by officers, as set out in the body of this report. Officers consider the project to meet the aims and published criteria of the fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding.

The project aims to turn an existing end-of-life scout hut, currently not fit for purpose, into a modern and accessible community hub adjacent to an identified SCC Key Neighbourhood.

Existing nearby community buildings are at capacity during the day so the new hub would provide much-needed extra capacity for community groups.

Executive Summary:

1. The project is proposing to demolish a 1960s, prefabricated, reinforced concrete building, in very poor condition, and replace it with a new energy efficient community building and scout headquarters, outside area and bicycle storage.
2. The project seeks to complement and enhance existing community facilities, with a focus on youth and the elderly. The existing youth groups mainly meet in the late afternoon and evenings, and the vision is to fully utilise the new space during the day as a low cost or free meeting point, providing a social hub in the heart of the community. It is intended to facilitate clubs, hobbies, interests and education, and help tackle social issues such as friendship, loneliness, well-being, antisocial behaviour and the environment as well as meeting the needs of a successful and growing Scout group.

Project Summary

3. 1st Ash Vale Scout Group is a registered charity with a long history of working in the local communities of Ash Vale and Ash. Over 125 Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides meet weekly at the Group Headquarters in Wood Street, Ash Vale. It is the largest youth group in the area and is accessible and inclusive to all.
4. The Ash and Ash Vale community is geographically fairly linear, bounded by the A331 to the west, and the Ash Ranges to the east. Transport links are limited, increasing the need for local facilities. The location is well placed just off Vale Road and close to a bus stop. The location is situated in Ash in the borough of Guildford, adjacent to, and serving the Key Neighbourhood of Ash Wharf.
5. The new accessible building will incorporate sufficient storage for proposed new users, a large hall, toilets and kitchen on the ground floor and a small meeting room and office on the first floor. The building is designed to be environmentally friendly and sustainable with solar panels, air source heat pumps and use of low energy LED lighting. Local builders will be used and during demolition they are looking to recycle as much material as possible.
6. St Mary's Church and the Chapel, the two other community facilities in the area, have confirmed there is need for additional community spaces in the area due to lack of capacity. They saw an increase in demand following the closure of the local Children's Centres and are expecting this to continue. It would also offer a second location for the local foodbank.
7. The project is particularly seeking to address loneliness among senior citizens, of whom there are approximately 2,300 in the area, many living on their own and plan to partner with the Happy Healing Hut, who promote mental wellbeing. Other proposed uses include lunch clubs, technology cafés, community repair workshops, dementia groups and zero waste initiatives.

8. Many local businesses are fully behind the idea and have pledged support along with community-based organisations who have expressed interest in using the building. It is initially proposed that 50% of the usage will be by the scout group and 50% by the community, but that is expected to increase over time. Commercial lettings of the space will fund and subsidise community uses.

Details

Description of project benefits

9. The benefits to the project include:
 - Provide a much-needed additional facility for community use in the area
 - Children and young people learn new skills
 - Opportunities to be active indoors and outdoors
 - Able to meet with others and get involved in projects to support the community.

Project Timeframes and Management

10. Planning permission for the project was awarded in May 2021, meaning it will lapse this year. Planning may need to be enacted or re-applied for, which could incur additional costs and time.
11. The project delivery is estimated to take approximately 9 months. The project will be managed by the 1st Ash Vale Scout Group Trustee Board. This Board are nominated by the Scout Council at an Annual General meeting held each year. The Scout Council includes all adult members to the Group as well as all children's parents. The Board has a long history of effective management.
12. The new building, its structure, systems, and outside spaces will be the ongoing responsibility of the Facilities Manager.

Project Lifespan

13. The new building will have a life expectancy of at least 50 years. Ongoing maintenance procedures have the potential to extend the lifespan beyond this.

Consultation:

14. Have your say, which featured the Ash Vale Scout Group Project, received 456 comments. No negative comments were received.
15. Letters of support and offers of donations have been received from different Councillors, organisations, groups and individuals including the Divisional Member Carla Morson, who fully supports the application.

Advisory Panel Comments

16. The project was discussed by the YFS Advisory Panel on 13th March 2024. All members of the Advisory Panel were supportive of the application and the benefits it would bring to the community.

Risk Management and Implications:

17. The risks to the project have been considered and Officers consider there to be adequate control measures in place. The key risks are:
- Increase in costs
 - Delays to planning permissions
 - Delays to the delivery of the project
 - Security at site during demolition and construction
18. Grants greater than £500,000 are monitored annually for 20 years after works completion to ensure ongoing community use. If a project were struggling to reach community groups, SCC would link them with Community Link Officers and Local Area Coordinators as appropriate as well as other partners in the voluntary sector.

Financial and Value for Money Implications:

19. YFS funding is requested to contribute towards the development of the new building. The project has applied for £606,443 which equates to 92% of the overall project costs. The remaining monies needed for the project have been raised or are expected from various sources.
20. Table 1. Financial Summary details the £54,170 of other funding against the total project cost of £648,413. Table 2 details the total project cost breakdown.

Table 1. Financial summary

Amount applied for:	£606,443
Total project cost:	£648,413
Percentage of cost against total:	92%
Have other funding sources been secured?	Yes Ash Vale Scouts Contribution
Other funding:	£41,970
Volunteer contributions:	£11,200
Non-cash contributions:	£1,000
Is there a commercial element to the project?	Yes
Amount suggested for funding:	£606,443

Table 2. Project Cost breakdown:

Activity	Total Cost (not inc. VAT)	YFS Funding	Other Funding
Professional fees including design and surveys	£17,675	£0	£17,675
Demolition of existing build and removal of all waste	£36,574	£12,279	£24,295
New building construction and fit-out	£552,194	£552,194	£0

Contingency against scope (3%)	£14,958	£14 958	£0
Contingency against inflation (5%)	£27,012	£27 012	£0
Total	£648,413	£606,443	£41,970

21. As with all applications, there is a risk that construction and purchase costs will increase between application, approval and tendering. This is partially mitigated by the contingency. The applicant has secured quotes that support their costing, and will ultimately be funded based on evidenced, actual spend, up to the amount awarded.
22. There is an assumption of revenue from users, but with likely lower property costs, the scout group's future viability is not dependent on this revenue.
23. Release of any funding will be conditioned in a funding agreement to an acceptable specification, tender process and tender selection as well as verification of all funding in place.

Section 151 Officer Commentary:
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24. 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.
25. 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.
26. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports this application. This project has been reviewed financially and is felt to be adequately planned. It is important to note that there is minimal investment from other parties into the project and value for money needs to be considered. The commercial viability of this project has been reviewed. There is an assumption of revenue from users, but with likely lower property costs, the scout group's future viability is not dependent on this revenue and the projected cashflow provides assurance that the Council's investment can be maintained on an ongoing basis. This does rely on commercial elements, which hold inherent risk, but methods to reduce costs when required are possible, addressing this concern. The project is low risk and has a wealth of positive support from the local community.

27. 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 £606,443 would be c£39,000.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:

28. The report sets out the information and steps for the consideration of the application further to the Council's governance arrangements for YFS.

29. 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.

Equalities and Diversity:

30. 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.

31. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced for YFS and was circulated as an Annex to the YFS Cabinet Report 26th January 2021.

Other Implications:

32. 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 below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Environmental sustainability	Environmental aspects have been considered in relation to the new building
Compliance against net-zero emissions target and future climate compatibility/resilience	The works will be in compliance with the net-zero emissions target
Public Health	The project has a positive impact on wider health outcomes, encouraging activity and social interaction

Report Author:

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Consulted:

Divisional County Councillor
 Portfolio Holder for Customer and Communities
 Corporate Finance and Commercial - SCC

Sources/background papers:

YFS Criteria

YFS Governance Document

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