

Agenda item number: 11

Date of meeting: 20thMay 2019

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Recreation and Amenities Committee

Report by: Mel Alexander

Job Title: Town Clerk

Subject: Moorside Community Centre

1 Purpose of Report

For Committee to receive a background information regarding the proposed transfer of Moorside Community Centre from West Berkshire Council to Thatcham Town Council.

2 Background

In late 2017 / early 2018 former Councillor Jason Collis initiated discussions with a West Berkshire Council Officer regarding a proposal to transfer Moorside Community Centre to Thatcham Town Council, due to a lack of resources within West Berkshire Council to continue to run this community asset efficiently and effectively.

The proposal was subsequently presented to Thatcham Town Council for consideration, and at a meeting on 15th January 2018, Council resolved “to agree in principle to the transfer of Moorside Community Centre from West Berkshire Council to Thatcham Town Council and that Town Council Officers liaise with West Berkshire Council Officers to draft Heads of Terms and that this matter continue to be considered by the Recreation and Amenities Committee with the final decision being made by Full Council” (FULL/2018/03).

At a meeting of the Recreation and Amenities Committee on 12th March 2018 Committee agreed draft Heads of Terms. However, these have subsequently been amended, reflecting West Berkshire Council’s desire to rent the first floor for a period of 12 months, commencing imminently, whilst one of its existing education facilities is refurbished. The draft, revised Heads of Terms, reflecting this, are attached. These have not yet been considered by the Town Council.

A Condition Survey was commissioned by West Berkshire Council and carried out in October 2018 which highlighted approximately £175,000 of revenue and capital expenditure over the period 2018 – 2028.

If the proposed transfer was to proceed, West Berkshire Council has offered a financial contribution (subject to Executive approval) of £14,995 to enable the Town Council to carry out the revenue works listed for 2018 and capital costs for both 2018 and 2019. Thatcham Town Council may also apply to West Berkshire Council's Community Solutions Fund for a maximum bid of £12,000 to assist with the costs of the first full year of revenue based works for 2019. A total funding offer of £26,995.

Thatcham Town Council commissioned a Visual Structural Inspection in December 2018, with particular emphasis on assessment of cracks in the walls in the sports hall. The report indicates that further investigation is required, copy enclosed.

No further progress has been made.

Further background information:

The nearby Spurcroft Primary School has some usage rights over Moorside's playing field and confirmation of the exact detail is awaited from West Berkshire Council.

Ownership and management of the Centre still lies with West Berkshire Council and a local charity, Thatcham Youth, currently manages the bookings.

3 Considerations

If the Town Council is minded to continue with the proposed transfer, the following risks and benefits should be considered:

| Risks | Benefits |
|---|--|
| Subsidised service provision | Long-term security of community asset |
| Uncertainty in ability for first floor to generate income | Supports local devolution - community asset run at community level |
| Additional staff costs | Potential savings due to amalgamation of similar contracts |
| Potential loss of income stream to Thatcham Youth through current day-to-day management arrangements (ongoing management arrangements not yet considered) | Offer of security to current and potential long-term hirers |
| Potential change in charges could result in loss of current hirers (charges not yet considered – draft budget based on Thatcham Youth's charges) | |
| Potential impact on the wider devolution programme** | |

| Other considerations |
|--|
| i. Could the Town Council lease the building to Thatcham Youth? |
| ii. Could West Berkshire Council lease the building to Thatcham Youth? |
| iii. Could Moorside be used for alternative community use? |

4 Financial Implications

Provision of £31,000 is in the Town Council's budget for 2019-20; which would cover the deficit in the draft budget without an increase to the precept (copy enclosed).

Introduction of an asset renewal programme will ensure funds are available for future expenditure commitments.

Thatcham Town Council understands there are no TUPE implications relating to this proposal.

5 Legislation

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s19.
Local Government Act 1972 s133.
Localism Act 2011.

6 Reference to Council Plan

Objective Five: To protect and improve the open spaces, recreation facilities and heritage.

7 Consultation

No consultation has been carried out.

8 Recommendation

That a site visit be arranged to enable Members to view the building, prior to further discussion regarding the proposed transfer.
