

Cabinet – 22 April 2009

Provision of a new Youth Centre in Chuckery

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's services
Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Service: Children's Services
Regeneration

Wards: St Matthews/Paddock

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

To approve the budget for and inclusion of the proposed Youth Centre project in the capital programme, and request delegated authority for the acceptance of tenders.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the proposed Youth Centre and budget of £0.537m as set out in this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes the building must be completed by 31 December 2009 to receive the grant funding of £0.452m and that alternate funding would potentially need to be found. Strong project management will be required to ensure there is no financial risk to the council.
- 2.3 That Cabinet delegates where appropriate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to accept tenders for project and enter into contract where tenders are within the budget.

3. Background information

- 3.1 One of the key challenges for local authorities is to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Section 507B of The Education Act 1996 placed a new duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to positive activities, and that authorities ascertain young people's views on provision and consider alternative providers.

A Borough wide audit of youth facilities including local authority and voluntary sector provision was undertaken in Autumn 2008 which, together with a needs analysis, identified the Chuckery area as an area with high incidents of anti social behaviour and social deprivation and few youth facilities (currently there is only

one evening social youth club on offer based in a small church hall which is inadequate).

- 3.2 In 2006, the DCSF launched The Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and the Youth Capital Fund (YCF). These Funds help LAs meet this statutory duty and contribute to the wider aims reflected in the *Aiming High, Children's Plan* and in the *Path to Success PSA* framework to tackle all forms of inequality, and give every young person a fair chance of success. The Funds provide discrete revenue and capital budgets for young people to control and decide how funding should be spent in their areas, and they provide a practical way in which LAs can begin to meet this.

The main aims of the Funds are to:

- give a voice and influence to young people, particularly those facing disadvantage, in relation to things to do and places to go and convey a powerful message to young people that their needs and aspirations are important;
- change the way local authorities and their partners commission and provide activities and facilities for young people, especially in deprived neighbourhoods, and increase the responsiveness of providers to what young people want;
- improve things to do and places to go in line with what young people want in their neighbourhoods and thereby increase their participation in positive activities;
- provide opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities and gain recognition and/or accreditation for them;
- increase the well-being of young people by contributing to the achievement of the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes through engagement in activities that have a positive impact on their development; and
- increase young people's engagement with their services more generally and with democratic processes at the local level.

- 3.3 A further fund, YCF Plus, is a one-off additional programme offered to 20 local authorities, Walsall included, to fund new youth facilities in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour and which currently lack good quality youth provision. The Council made an application to this fund in February 2009 and the DCSF approved the proposed location met the criteria and the Council was successful in obtaining a grant for £452,000. The council is also contributing £85,406.00 providing a total budget of £537,406.00 for construction costs, professional fees and development costs.

Young people and ward councillors will be engaged in discussions regarding the type of facility needed in Chuckery and currently young people have undertaken an initial consultation project with local residents and community leaders. There is significant support locally for the establishment of a suitable facility for young people.

The nearest secondary school in the Chuckery area (Blue Coat Church of England) is a partner in a Youth Crime Action Plan initiative which has brought together police officers, community wardens and youth workers to engage with young people in pre and post school time activities, including Friday and Saturdays. The development of a suitable base to allow for any associated project work will be beneficial and support the sustainability of this initiative.

It is envisaged that a purpose built multi use youth facility in Chuckery would offer a range of social, educational and leisure opportunities at times of most need including weekends. Resources for youth activities would be deployed through existing youth services as part of our plans for Integrated Young People's Support Service arrangements(Ref: Cabinet report 18th March : Young People's Integrated Support Services).

- 3.4 A 0.4 acre site, located at the corner of Charlotte Street and Walhouse Road and in the Council's ownership, has been identified as the proposed location for the new facility. The land was formerly occupied by housing but this was cleared in the early 1980s and since that time it has been used as an informal amenity area. The development of a high quality new young people's facility will help to support the regeneration of the Chuckery area.

The Property Services consultancy framework will be used to prepare a scheme for the site, which will continue to involve consultation with young people on the design and with local residents in relation to the use of the facility. Subject to planning permission being granted – the planning application is anticipated to be submitted by the end of April - the programme is aiming to ensure construction would be completed and the facility opened by December 2009.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

The total cost of the project is estimated to be in the region of £0.537m, based on project build costs and fee estimations from Property Services. Of this £3,600 has already been spent in 2008/9 on a feasibility study and architect fees.

A grant of £0.452m has been secured from the DCSF for this project from the Youth Capital Fund Plus (YCF Plus). This leaves £0.081m to be funded by the Council. This funding will come from £0.036m of the Youth Capital Grant for 2008/09 and 2009/10. The remaining £0.046m will be funded from the commitment from 2008/09 Youth mainstream capital programme for which a carry forward has been approved. There are no capital implications relating to the purchase of land as the proposed site is Council owned. Ant risk of overspending on completing the project would be covered from within the Universal Services budget.

If the building is not completed by 31 December 2009 then there is a risk that the grant funding would be lost and that the Council would need to find alternative funding. Strong project management will be required to ensure that the grant funding is retained.

Ongoing revenue costs associated with running the building will be provided by the Integrated Young People's Support Services.

4.2 Legal:

Design consultants will be engaged from Property Services Consultancy framework and tenders for construction will be invited in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules from the Council's Standing approved list

4.3 Staffing:

The new Youth Centre will be managed as part of Walsall's Integrated Young People's Support Services.

5. Citizen impact

The YCF Plus fund will help give a voice and influence to young people, particularly those facing disadvantage, in relation to things to do and places to go and convey a powerful message to young people that their needs and aspirations are important. The Chuckery facility will increase young people's engagement with their services more generally and with democratic processes at the local level.

6. Community safety

One of the key challenges for local authorities is to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Section 507B of The Education Act 1996 placed a new duty on local authorities to secure young people's access to positive activities, and that authorities ascertain young people's views on provision and consider alternative providers.

7. Environmental impact

The new building will be designed with a BREEAM rating of Very Good. It is expected that the scheme will include a high quality building and landscaping proposals to enhance the amenity of the area and contribute to wider regeneration.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

As with all new building projects, there is a risk that planning permission will not be granted for the facility. Pre-application consultation with local residents and planning officers is proposed in an attempt to reduce the likelihood of objections to the scheme.

The programme to build the new facility is very tight and construction procurement will have to commence at the earliest opportunity. There are risks in the short timetable and these have been compiled on the project risk register to be managed through the project

8.2 Performance management:

A project manager, within Property Services, has been appointed to coordinate the project which will be monitored through the Council's Project Register.

The project will be overseen by a Project Board. This Board will include relevant senior council officers, councillors and key partners. A young people's reference group will also be established and ensure representation from end users.

9. Equality implications

Central to the operation of the YCF Fund is the principle of access and inclusion. All young people should be able to participate in this initiative in a meaningful way if they wish to, especially young people from disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. The project will need to ensure that young people's decision making bodies are fully representative of the local authority area.

10. Consultation

An initial workshop has been held with Young people to identify what sort of facility they need. This dialogue will be ongoing during the design of the project and a young people's reference group will be established. Consultation will also take place with local residents as part of the planning application process.

Background papers

DCSF Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund Guidance

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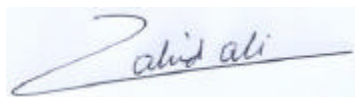
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