

**Meeting date:** 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
**Report to:** Cabinet Member for Leisure, Tourism & Sport  
**Subject/report title:** Dickens Heath Community Facility  
**Report from:** Assistant Director – Stronger Communities  
**Report author/lead contact officer:** Chris Barr – Head of Public Realm

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  
 Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  
 Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** Select an Exemption paragraph from the Quick Parts drop-down list

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet Member approval for the Dickens Heath Community Facility proposal based on the key future principals as outlined in this report.

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

- 2.1 Approve the Dickens Heath Community Facility proposal, based on the following principals and key conditions.
- (a) As legally required the proposed building is subject to the appropriate planning approval.
  - (b) A detailed facility usage, revenue funding and governance plan is finalised and reported back to Cabinet member for Leisure, Tourism and Sport early in the new year and approved before construction of the facility can commence.

**3. What is the issue?**

- 3.1 Since 2004 various funding streams have been made available through the Section 106 planning funding process for the delivery of improvements to Dickens Heath. These are contributions associated with both the initial construction of Dickens Heath village and various additional development extensions to the village that have been

completed over the years since 2004.

- 3.2 Included in this funding are a number of developer contributions towards the delivery of provisions for young people in Dickens Heath, particularly young people between 13 and 17 years of age.
- 3.3 Current youth provision in Dickens Heath consists of a conventional younger children's play area on the village green, which is not suitable or applicable for young people in the 13 to 17 age bracket. The Scouts, Cubs and Beavers are all popular in Dickens Heath and currently operate on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from Dickens Heath Community Primary School and there is a youth club that up until recently operated once per week at Dickens Heath Parish Council offices.
- 3.4 Since 2004 multiple investigations, feasibility assessments and consultations have been undertaken to identify what young people need in terms of a facility and most importantly in terms of trying to identify sites suitable for the development of a youth provision type facility.
- 3.5 However, every option and consideration in terms of this facility has experienced the same issue regarding the availability and suitability of any land or site to accommodate youth provision. Regardless of the type, shape, style and function of facility, unfortunately previous attempts have concluded that Dickens Heath has very little available land or space that is suitable and/or appropriate. Any land remaining within the village is either too small and/or is already designated to provide an alternative specific purpose, for example conservation land.
- 3.6 It is also important to highlight that the original idea of a facility for young people was very much around the traditional off the shelf setup, such as a multi-use games area, skateboard facility, outdoor meeting area or a combination of the three. However, as time has progressed, industry standards improved and various consultations with young people in Dickens Heath have been undertaken, thoughts and ideas have evolved to acknowledge that these conventional options, whilst they tick a box in terms of provision, may not deliver the level of value needed for young people. The overall message given by young people in Dickens Heath is that of having a safe, secure and welcoming place to be, meet and socialise.

#### **4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

- 4.1 Whilst the Council had exhausted all feasible options in terms of a suitable site to accommodate a facility for youth provision, in 2014 the Head Teacher of Dickens Heath Community Primary School approached the Council and proposed the possibility of the School accommodating a suitably sized facility to deliver youth provision on the School grounds.
- 4.2 Further exploration of this proposal and investigations were undertaken and the Council working with Dickens Heath Community Primary School developed options in terms of a facility that could provide both youth and wider community provision within the school grounds. Through this joint working, considerations turned towards a building type facility that could connect to the existing community farm and multi-use

games area that already exists in the school grounds. A building would open up options for indoor youth provision, therefore offering much more in terms of value to young people, particularly during the winter months.

- 4.3 Since 2004 the Section 106 contributions agreements for this project have increased and there is now a budget of £300,000 available for such a facility. Therefore also opening up opportunities to realistically explore the option of a building, rather than the original intentions back in 2004 of an outdoor games area or skate park.
- 4.4 In 2016 the Councils Landscape Architect Team undertook design and site assessment work to create indicative plans to inform the Council and the School in terms of options for a building within the School grounds. The result was positive with regards to a possible opportunity to create a single storey building, which could be sensitively positioned on land at the end of the main School car park. Land which could also be separately secured and accessed independent of the School main building and play areas. **Appendix 1** provides a plan of the proposed facility location.
- 4.5 The indicative site and design assessments further assisted in advising on the type of building that could be delivered within a budget of £300,000. The ideal option being a prefabricated modular building that is in keeping with the School design and with a layout that is sensitive to nearby property and normal School business. The idea of a prefabricated building was also a positive option in terms of the most efficient construction process, again minimising local disruption and being sensitive to School business and nearby residents.
- 4.6 Furthermore both the School and the Council were of the opinion that a building type facility could be multifunctional in its use in terms of not just providing youth provision, but also in terms of providing a facility and opportunities for the community as a whole. Therefore delivering stronger value for money by delivering youth provision and added value through other community use opportunities when not being used by young people.
- 4.7 Both the School and Council favoured this option, however, due to the nature of the work it was considered important to consult with the community on this proposal. Therefore the following community consultation was undertaken:
  - Face to face briefings and display stands with parents at the Dickens Heath Community Primary School Open Day on the 20/07/16;
  - Face to face briefings and display stands with the community at Dickens Heath Library on the 28/07/16;
  - Web based consultation on [www.solihull.gov.uk](http://www.solihull.gov.uk) from 12/08/16 - 09/10/16, to cater for any members of the community that were unable to attend either the School open day as parents or the Library.
- 4.8 112 people participated in the consultation, 90 (80.4%) people supporting the proposal, 20 (17.9%) against the proposal and 2 (1.7%) not sure. **Appendix 2** provides a detailed overview of the results from the community consultation.
- 4.9 As part of this consultation process communications were undertaken with key stakeholders such as Ward Members, School Governing Body and Dickens Heath

Parish Council.

- 4.10 Dickens Heath Parish Council whilst welcoming the proposed facility raised a question as to whether Dickens Heath Community Primary School was the right location to accommodate this facility and/or provide youth provision in Dickens Heath Village. Dickens Heath Parish Council proposed an alternative facility to accommodate and deliver youth provision for Dickens Heath Village, that being the Dickens Heath Sports Club located on Rumbush Lane.
- 4.11 In response to Dickens Heath Parish Council's question and being respectful of Dickens Heath Parish Council as a key stakeholder the proposal was suspended and the Council agreed to undertake an independent investigation into the newly proposed site. Whilst this did delay any further implementation of the facility proposal, it was deemed important to respond to this new request in the right way, ensuring that all options were explored and that any future proposal decision could be robustly evidenced.
- 4.12 In 2017 an independent assessment was undertaken by an industry leading consultant for youth and play, with the remit to review the potential suitability of delivering youth provision at Dickens Heath Sports Club and also a further independent assessment into the suitability of delivering youth provision at Dickens Heath Community Primary School. The intention was to further inform any decision and provide a comparison between the two sites.
- 4.13 The outcome of the independent assessment was that Dickens Heath Sports Club was unsuitable as a youth provision site for Dickens Heath Village. The main reasoning behind these findings related to accessibility and safety. Dickens Heath Sports Club is located on the outskirts of the village and there is no safe pedestrian access to the site. Therefore this would significantly restrict young people from attending the facility. Even if a pedestrian footpath was created to access the site, young people would still be required to walk along semi-rural highway, without any natural surveillance, venturing outside of the village to attend the site. This would still present safety concerns particularly in the winter months and darker evenings.
- 4.14 However, the independent assessment reported favourably in terms of the provision being provided at Dickens Heath Community Primary School. The report complimented the safety and access due to the School being easily accessible in the centre of the village. The report also highlighted the positive feeling of security that using the school could provide to young people, most of which it is assumed will have attended the School in primary stages and therefore will already have a familiar connection to the School and surrounding environment.
- 4.15 Following the independent assessment, the proposal for a community facility at Dickens Heath Community Primary School recommenced with a number of more detailed site and environmental surveys were undertaken which further confirmed the proposed location at the end of the School car park as the most suitable for such a facility.
- 4.16 In early 2018 a project team was formed to help bring the project to the point of design and construction. The project team included Council Officers, Senior School Staff,

members of the School Governing Body and representatives from the Scouts.

- 4.17 Work was undertaken to try and identify market providers of prefabricated modular buildings that would fit the brief of the proposed facility. In September 2018 Wernick, a specialist modular building provider were commissioned to undertake the detailed design, with the intention that Wernick will provide support in the planning approval process, project management and construction of the facility pending the various approvals from Cabinet Member and Planning.
- 4.18 Wernick have been approved through the relevant Council procurement approval process to provide this service. It is important to stress that other methods of construction and other providers were considered, including a more conventional 'bricks and mortar' style building, however, the cost, significant construction time and disruption associated with this type of construction would be unacceptable in comparison to the benefits and efficiencies of modular building construction.
- 4.19 The design work currently being delivered by Wernick is still in the process of refinement at the time of writing this report. However, **Appendix 3** provides the most recent indicative design and image.
- 4.20 Future sustainable delivery of this facility is imperative. Both the Council and the School are very mindful of the necessity to ensure the facility can and will be sustainable and operational in the future. Also that the facility will be managed jointly as a community asset and is protected in terms of any future organisational changes to both the School and Council.
- 4.21 Therefore, in terms of youth provision, the Council and the School have undertaken various investigations into the wider youth provision offer in Dickens Heath and how this provision can be coordinated and managed through the proposed facility. It is proposed that youth provision will be a mixture of third party provision through the Scouts and Dickens Heath Youth Club and through direct after school provision, open to young people between 13 and 17 on select evenings, to be supervised by School staff. There is already a healthy level of outside School participation in terms of using the multi use games area and community farm.
- 4.22 Both the Council and the School are very much aware of the future revenue costs that will be associated with running this facility. Dickens Heath Community Primary School have given a commitment to manage these revenue costs, in return for using the facility as and when there is no youth or community use during School hours. This will include revenue costs such as utilities and running costs and any costs associated with staff supervision of youth provision after School hours.
- 4.23 Whilst there is a clear commitment from all parties to ensure this facility is sustainable for future, all parties are keen to ensure that robust written agreements and governance processes are in place. Officers also believe this should be a key principal in terms of this report and Cabinet Member decision to support this facility proposal. Therefore Officers propose that a further detailed report be presented back to Cabinet in the new calendar year outlining a future facility usage plan, revenue plan and governance agreement for Cabinet member approval.

## **5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

- 5.1 It has been important to outline the detailed history and context behind this project and outline the many considerations that have been explored prior to this proposal. In summary the key factors supporting this proposal are as follows:
- (a) Previous studies have proven that there is no suitable land to accommodate youth provision in Dickens Heath other than Dickens Heath Community Primary School;
  - (b) Due to further financial contributions since 2004 the higher level of capital funding now available provides more enhanced opportunity to provide a building type facility for year round youth provision and under the capacity of a community facility, with the opportunity to provide added value and additional wider community use;
  - (c) Community consultation supports the proposal for youth provision through a community building on the School site;
  - (d) Key stakeholder communication has demonstrated full support from the School and other stakeholders such as the Scouts;
  - (e) A further independent feasibility study has been undertaken to further inform and firm up the decision making around this proposal, supporting and evidencing the decision around the School site;
  - (f) Detailed assessments have been undertaken in terms of informing the right process for commissioning the design and construction of the building, with a variety of options considered through the appropriate corporate procurement process.

## **6. Implications and Considerations**

- 6.1 Whilst this report is asking for Cabinet Member decision to support the proposed Dickens Heath Community Facility, Officers are mindful of the need for further work both in terms of the facility design, planning approval and future sustainability agreement. Therefore Officers recommend this decision is based on the following conditions:
- (a) As legally required the proposed building is subject to the appropriate planning approval;
  - (b) A detailed facility usage, revenue funding and governance plan is finalised and reported back to Cabinet member for Leisure, Tourism and Sport early in the new year and approved before construction of the facility can commence.
- 6.2 Delivery of key themes in the Council Plan:

How will the options/proposals in this report contribute to the delivery of the key themes in the Council Plan?

- ☒ Improve Health and Wellbeing – By providing better community links and coordinated access to youth provision and current school facilities such as the community farm and/or trim trail for young people.
- ☒ Managed Growth – By utilising Section 106 contributions in a way that it delivers both the core reasoning for the funding and also wider added value for the wider community.
- ☒ Build Stronger Communities – By enabling community organisations to deliver key provision through the right type of facility such as the growing local Scout groups and the popular community youth group.
- ☒ Deliver Value – By undertaking studies, assessments and investigations that evidence the best type of facility in terms of positioning, construction, design and in terms of how it can offer multiple community use.

6.3 Implications for children and young people, vulnerable groups and particular communities:

6.3.1 Dickens Heath Village to date does not have any specific space and facility to offer youth provision in terms of 13 to 17 years of age. Consultation with young people tells us that there is a need for a safe and secure place for young people to meet and socialise and the delivery of this facility will enable this both through provision supported by Dickens Heath Community Primary School and through third party groups such as Scouts.

6.4 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.4.1 Consultation has been undertaken both in terms of various previous consultations with young people and through the specific wider community consultation as outlined in the main body of this report. However further consultation will continue with young people in terms of defining future youth provision delivery.

6.4.2 Whilst previous consultation with key stakeholders such as Ward Members and Dickens Heath Parish Council has been undertaken, further consultation will be carried out as and when this proposal moves through the design, planning and construction phase.

6.5 Financial implications:

6.5.1 Over the years the Section 106 contributions agreements for this project have increased and there is now a budget of £300,000 available for such a facility.

6.6 Legal implications:

6.6.1 Whilst there are no specific legal implications, Council Legal Services will be engaged to review and advise on the proposed future governance plan.

6.7 Risk implications:

6.7.1 This proposal and future actions will comply with corporate Council requirements around managing risk.

6.8 Statutory Equality Duty:

6.8.1 This proposal and future actions will comply with corporate Council requirements around statutory equality duty.

## **7. List of appendices referred to**

7.1 Appendix 1 - provides a plan of the proposed facility location.

7.2 Appendix 2 - provides a detailed overview of the results from the community consultation.

7.3 Appendix 3 - provides the most recent indicative design and image.

## **8. Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 N/A

## **9. List of other relevant documents**

9.1 N/A