

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

RUDLOE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Executive Summary

This report deals with an application for the transfer of the management, control and maintenance of Rudloe Community Centre and carpark from Wiltshire Council to the Rudloe Community Association, in accordance with Wiltshire Council's Asset Transfer Policy. The Association has recently been reactivated for the purpose of returning the centre to community use. The site is strategic (Category 1) as it offers opportunity for affordable housing and has had a value in excess of £250k.

Proposal

The Area Board is asked to consider an application submitted by Rudloe Community Association for the transfer of the management, control and maintenance, of Rudloe Community Centre and carpark. The applicants' proposal is set out in Appendix 2 and 3.

Reasons For Proposal

This proposal supports and implements Wiltshire Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

Recommendation

To consider the application at the 12th October 2023 Area Board meeting.

If supportive, to refer the application to Cabinet.

Ros Griffiths

Strategic Engagement and Partnership Manager

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

RUDLOE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Purpose of Report

1. The Area Board is asked to consider an application submitted by Rudloe Community Association for the transfer of the management, control and maintenance of Rudloe Community Centre and car park to return it to community use (see plan attached at Appendix 1). The applicants' proposal is set out at Appendix 2 and 3.

Background

2. Wiltshire Council is supporting the principle of the transfer of community assets to empower and strengthen local communities. The Council believes that transferring appropriate public assets to communities leads to more responsive services that better meet local people's priorities.
3. Transfer of an asset can also provide the opportunity to lever more resources into a community and provide a more accessible and responsive base from which to deliver local services.
4. A community group or organisation can benefit from greater financial stability and build confidence through having ownership (or in this case long term security through a lease) of a physical asset. This financial sustainability can help the organisation become less dependent on grants, provide security for further borrowing and opportunities for further growth.
5. Typically, organisations that would be considered appropriate are Voluntary and Community Groups/Associations, Town or Parish Councils, Trusts or Charities, Social Enterprise Groups, or Community Amateur Sports Associations.
6. The application from Rudloe Community Association is attached at Appendix 2 and 3 and relates to the transfer of the management, control and maintenance of Rudloe Community Centre and carpark.
7. The application was submitted in accordance with the Council's application process and meets the requirements for consideration by the Area Board. The site is strategic (Category 1) as it offers opportunity for affordable housing and has had a value in excess of £250k.
8. The Strategic Engagement and Partnership Manager has consulted with Wiltshire Council's Estates team and officers in Leisure Services, which is the legal owner of the site, who have undertaken appropriate consultation with service departments across the Council. Local consultation has been undertaken by the applicant in accordance with the application checklist and the outcome of the consultation is included within the application (appendix 3). The local member has been apprised.

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Main Considerations from Estates Service

9. Wiltshire Council's discussion with GreenSquareAccord (GSA) involved the redevelopment of the community centre together with GSA housing stock to deliver a net gain of affordable housing. The various delays in the process mean that viability of the scheme (reflecting rental income and Homes England grants) would not be supported. As it was proposed as a 100% affordable scheme there was no commercial element to their consideration for withdrawal
10. It proposed that Corsham Baptist Church are the anchor tenant and whilst the reason for this is understood the lease will restrict any use of the building for political or religious activity (for example conducting religious services).
11. Within the business plan there is reference to Wiltshire Council meeting any capital costs in making the building fit for use such as roof repairs, window repairs and ensuring the heating system is in working order before taking the lease. At this point no funds have been allocated by the Council to carry this out, the amount needed is unknown and usually no works are undertaken prior to a lease being granted. The applicant needs to factor in the cost of bringing the building up to a suitable standard and the associated costs.
12. In August 2023 the Council's Asset Gateway Group noted the community interest and agreed to allow 3 months for a formal Community Asset Transfer application to be made.
13. At this stage the application does not provide a financial business case demonstrating income and expenditure, although earlier in the year the Corsham Baptist Church did express an interest to take on the building. The running costs of the building will be substantial, yet the application does not provide for the ability for these to be met. As such the risk of success cannot be assessed based on the information provided, plus the need for capital investment and ability to do this cannot be factored in.
14. No detail of the lease terms have been set out, but it is assumed that a full repairing lease will be taken for a number of years. Community Asset Transfer leases all have a cessation clause included, allowing the community group to relinquish their liabilities and hand back the building. Even with this in place, it would be prudent to grant a relatively short lease (say 7 years) to determine if the venture is successful.

Main Considerations from Communities Service

15. Through partnership and collaboration Rudloe Community Association (RCA) seeks to offer a thriving multi-purpose venue to the community and a positive programme of activities to benefit residents. Local surveys have indicated the need and support for a community centre, currently only the Dandelion Café provides a meeting space in the locality. Community Leaders, including Box Parish Council support this initiative.
16. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is a national ranking from the Office of National Statistics and brings together indicators covering specific areas of deprivation. These aspects include income, employment, skills and training, health and disability, education, barriers to housing and services, living environment and crime. Deprivation is associated with an unmet

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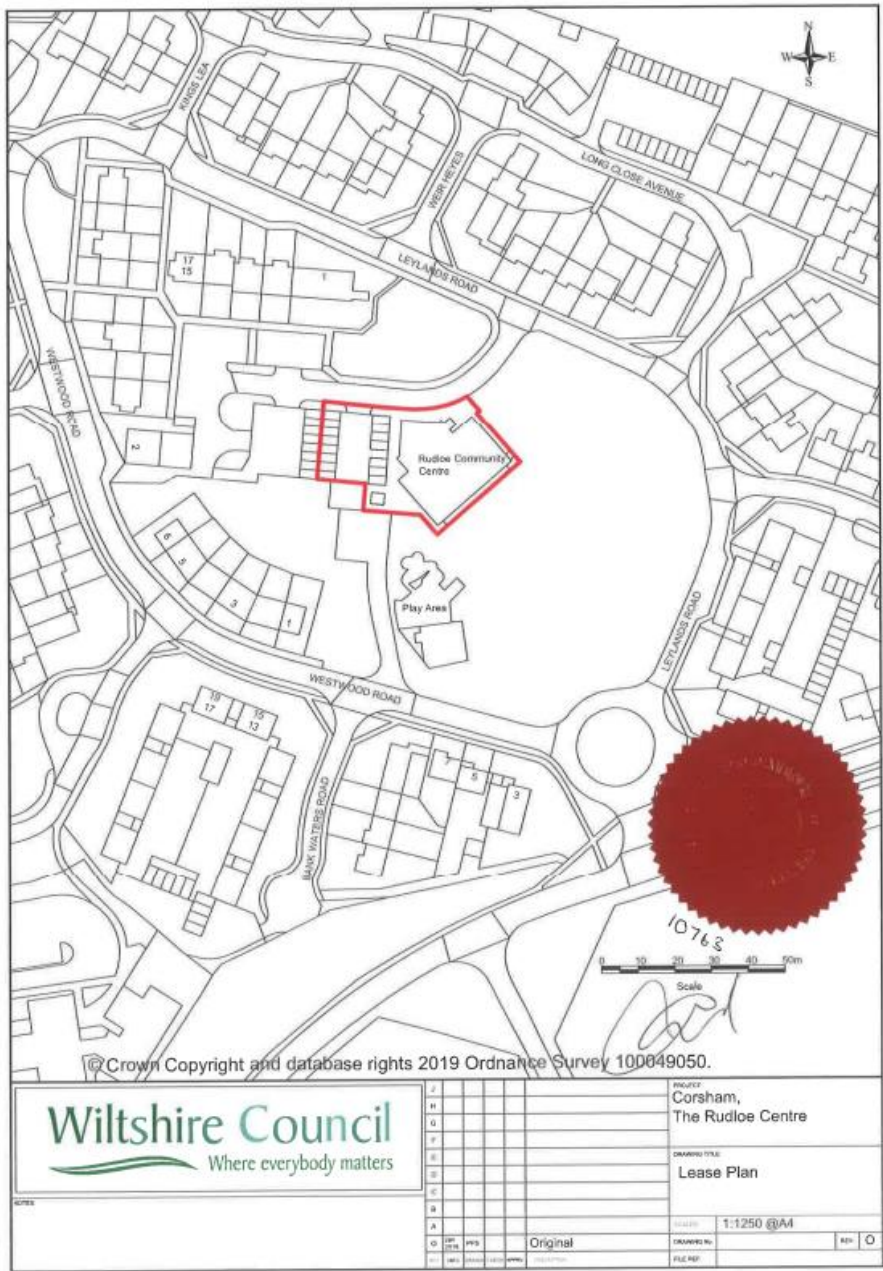
need in these areas. Rudloe North is the 40th most deprived Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in Wiltshire, out of 285. This puts it in the 1st quintile or 20% most deprived in the county.

Recommendation

17. To consider the application at the 12th October 2023 Area Board meeting.
18. If supportive, to refer the Community Asset Transfer application to Cabinet.

Ros Griffiths, Strategic Engagement and Partnership Manager

APPENDIX 1 – PLAN



		PROJECT Corsham, The Rudloe Centre	
		DRAWING TITLE Lease Plan	
SCALE 1:1250 @A4		DRAWING No. 421	
DATE Original		FILE REF.	

APPENDIX 2 – APPLICATION

Form CAT01

Community asset transfer: application

Your details

Your Organisation	<input type="text" value="Rudloe Community Association"/>
Contact name	<input type="text" value="Gordon Matthews"/>
Position held	<input type="text" value="Trustee"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Telephone	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>

Your proposal

(please complete Checklist CAT02 before filling in the following form)

Details of asset

Please include exact location, address, postcode, size, boundaries, access points and a map if possible

Rudloe Community Centre to include carpark and excluding Rudloe Green. Ground floor ex-shop.

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Summary of proposal

Why do you want the asset and how will this benefit the local community?

To re-open the asset as a Community Centre for the benefit of the general public and specifically the population in the environs. The local community will gain a significant amenity for use as a location for clubs, activities, parties, events, cafe, social agency outreach, polling station, meetings, warmspace etc.

Community use

Please explain how the asset will be used

(Please refer to questions 5-8 in the checklist - CAT02)

It is extremely well served with large rooms and dance hall, excellent toilets and is superbly located within the community with good car parking. It was very well built and only 20 years old. Heavy solid fire doors. Gas, water and electricity available.

Suitability for purpose

Please explain why this asset is suitable for the intended purpose

(Please refer to questions 5-8 in the checklist - CAT02)

It was designed as a community centre with disabled access. It is also in excellent condition requiring very little effort to bring on-stream.

Community support and consultation

Please set out who you have consulted about your proposal and how you have addressed any concerns raised

(Please refer to questions 9-14 in the checklist - CAT02)

The answers to questions 9-14 is yes to all. The Parish Council has raised concerns that their clerk doesn't have the skills required to meet GPC. Local surveys have indicated the need and support for a community centre. The local Baptist Church have demonstrated a desire to use the Centre to deliver community shop, toddler group, youth group etc.

Legal issues

Please set out how you will address any legal, planning, insurance and health and safety matters associated with the asset *(Please refer to questions 15-18 in the checklist - CAT02)*

The answers to questions 15-18 is yes. There is no change of use required and the building met Health and Safety standards in 2017 so, although it is possible that it no longer meets standards eg. microswitches, bringing it up to meet those standards should not be onerous.

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Financial matters

How will you fund running costs and maintenance? Are you willing to pay for the asset?

(Please refer to questions 19-23 in the checklist - CAT02)

The Centre aims to 'wash its face' financially but will require some seed funding. The PC has funds that have been earmarked for Rudloe as a result of S106 money from the Dickens Gate development. Depending on the state of the heating system(which looks good) this seed funding would be relatively small.

Future management

How will you manage the asset and ensure that it continues to contribute to the wellbeing of the local community in the future?

(Please refer to questions 24-27 in the checklist - CAT02)

This is the biggest challenge. The Centre closed due to a failure of succession planning. There is always some risk where volunteers are involved however with support from the Corsham Baptists who have access to management expertise the burden on trustees will be lighter. The PC is also supportive.

DECLARATION

I confirm that the details included in this application are correct

Signed: *P Turner*

Name (please print): Paul Turner

Date: 26 September 2023

Rudloe Community Centre Bid to Wiltshire Council – Appendix 3

RUDLOE COMMUNITY CENTRE – Bid to Wiltshire Council for a Community Asset Transfer from Wiltshire Council to the Rudloe Community Association

1. Trustees of the Rudloe Community Association (hereafter referred to as RCA)

David Dorey, Paul Turner,
Steve Abbot, Rob Perks, Chris Wilgar,

2. Purpose of the RCA

The purpose of the RCA is to improve the quality of life for the residents of Rudloe by contributing to their social, physical, economic, educational, financial and environmental wellbeing and sense of belonging and provide a social Hub at the centre of the community.

3. Requirement

Residents of Rudloe require access to an appropriate community centre that will provide a place to meet and hold activities for the purposes described in 2 above for all ages and a place for people to get involved in the life of the community.

4. RCA Vision for the Rudloe Community Centre

For the RCA to take a long lease over RCC by means of community asset transfer from Wiltshire Council, thereby taking it into Community ownership in order to:

- become a vibrant place where all the community feel welcome and can engage in a wide range of activities.
- actively promote and support social and financial inclusion for people facing social or financial challenges. Offer a “food bank” style Community Marketplace and Café and be seen as a hub at the heart of the community. Offer free, regulated money advice services and support.
- provide opportunities for the community to meet and ease social isolation and loneliness.
- support home workers by providing hot desking and meeting facilities.
- provide an opportunity for volunteering and community engagement.

5. History and Background

Built in 2000-2001 by North Wiltshire District Council, the Rudloe Community Centre replaced the original post WW2 building that had served as the local meeting place since 1955. The new RCC was designed specifically for activities that were relevant in the early 2000s and had a positive impact on the community. However, as time passed and with the advent of easily accessible broadband and ICT availability, usage declined. The corresponding reduction in revenue and the practical pressures of managing the centre contributed to its closure in 2017.

Since 2017 Wiltshire Council (WC) has been engaged with Green Square Accord (GSA) in order to discover a way forward for the Rudloe Green and the Community Centre. The GSA management board recently decided that the Rudloe redevelopment plans were commercially unattractive and returned the Rudloe Community Centre to Wiltshire Council

The Centre is based within its own grounds in a very strategic, central place on the Rudloe Estate. The site has a large car park, a play area plus approximately 1 acre of grassed area. This is currently used by local children and families as a play and social area especially those living in flats and houses that may have limited access for outdoor activities. Informal discussions and meetings with the residents of Rudloe have demonstrated that the residents have high levels of dissatisfaction with the current opportunities and accessibility to facilities for community engagement.

We understand that Wiltshire Council is looking for proposals to make use of the Centre into the future and the RCA believe that this proposal provides the community with a unique opportunity to reopen the RCC that would be founded on a different and more stable financial model while also updating its purpose so that it better meets the needs of the community.

6. Transition

The RCA has been revitalised with new Trustees with a passion for reopening the Centre and a vision for the benefits it can bring to the Community.

The RCC has unique selling points. It is the largest venue of its size and quality in Rudloe. The location is at the centre of the original Rudloe estate and with easy walking distance of the existing housing and the proposed new housing developments within the Rudloe and West Corsham areas.

7. Strategy

The RCA plan to operate in a completely new way, seeking to add to the range of events and activities; offering attractive facilities for public and private use; meeting local needs for active volunteering and identifying gaps in local provision. We intend to enter into partnerships with local providers of services to the community to ensure long term sustainability of the Centre as a community hub.

On completion of an Asset Transfer from WC to RCA, the Association intends to enter into the first of these partnerships, granting a license and service Agreement to Corsham Baptist Church (CBC) (For more detail on CBC, see Appendix) to provide a facilities management service, to take on financial and practical responsibility for the maintenance and running cost of the building and to extend some already well established services in Corsham to the community in Rudloe. This will relieve the RCA from any financial liability, particularly in the early years as the Centre becomes established. The RCA will remain arbiters of who can use the building – although CBC will be an anchor tenant the Centre will also be open to all faith groups and non-faith groups at the discretion of the RCA. This arrangement will also provide a solution for the immediate need to find administrators who will organise and run the Centre day to day as CBC will manage reception and booking services, provide tea and coffee facilities with support from local volunteers from the community and any other administration services as agreed with the RCA

CBC has a track record of running services successfully in Corsham and to a much more limited extent in Rudloe, primarily due to space and availability restrictions, at the MOD Dandelion Café. The intention is to gradually introduce a wider range of services in Rudloe through the Rudloe Community Centre over a period of months.

Another aspect on which the Trustees will focus will be to encourage the use of the hall by arts groups, including performance art, music, displays and films. It is the aim of the RCA to enhance local life by developing, in partnership with others, a mixed and varied programme of cultural events, over time producing revenue to reinvest in the Centre development. The centre will work to develop events and activities in line with the aims and objectives of RCA and work in partnership with local government and ward alliance to produce a coherent and linked in programme.

We will work with Learning Disability teams, mental health providers or one of the employment creation schemes to develop further strategies. A venture of this kind can be a very effective and worthwhile way forward.

8. Market Needs:

- Organisations need venues for their meetings and events.
- There is nowhere else in Rudloe, apart from Dandelion Café for people to meet informally or for homeworkers to have access to a hot desking area.
- There are limited organised activities that promote wellbeing and engagement available for Adults or Children.

9. Market segmentation:

- Anchor tenants. Organisations renting space within the hall.
- Group hirers. Local community groups or commercial organisations wishing to hire the hall to stage their own events or activities.
- Personal hirers. Local people wishing to hire the Centre for family events, birthdays etc.

- Those needing a public place to meet one to one or in small groups for business or leisure purposes.

10. Proposed activity in first 6 months of operation

- Let available space to core tenants and groups, as well as individual residents, leaving as little unoccupied space as possible.
- Seek assistance of volunteers to become involved in the day to day running of the Centre, to be coordinated by CBC for RCA through an interview process to ensure security of the premises, safety of users of the Centre and suitability of individuals coming forward.
- Maximise the hire of the building by groups and individuals for private and community use.
- Promote the usage of the hall more widely; expand the range of hirers.
- Encourage the widest possible use of the hall for community activities.
- Offer a varied and thriving multi-purpose venue to the community.

11. Marketing and promoting the Centre

It is the intention to establish a readily identifiable brand image and corporate identity which can be easily recognised in the area, building on the community status. This will help to maximise the existing high profile and promote the venue widely.

The RCA will promote use of the centre through social media. Traditional marketing routes will be utilised such as flyers, banners and notice boards around the centre and through partners promoting activities for their own events and the wider use of the centre.

It is likely that a launch event will be held at the centre to celebrate the reopening and to increase awareness of the services available and the opportunities to use the space.

Use of existing contacts to build upon past customers for the hall. From discussions already held, a good response is expected.

Public relations: existing good links with local media will be exploited. Stories will be given to local press and TV and radio announcing reopening of the centre and availability for hire, exploiting the current high profile and maximising human interest stories as they develop.

A website, vital to any project today, www.rudloecic.org.uk will be established.

The intent is to develop an online booking system in due course when funds allow.

Use will be made of the large frontage of the building to promote availability of the space and advertise specific events.

Attractive leaflets and posters will be produced and distributed widely and a carefully targeted campaign run to the numerous local organisations and supporters.

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With CBC providing facilities management and underwriting maintenance and running costs, any income generated can be used to mitigate some of these costs and to invest in developing the centre and its activities.

12. Draft Pricing Structure

Hall hire rates and kitchen hire rates are based on similar facilities in community-run venues.

Hall

- Hourly rate (Commercial) £25
- Daily Rate (Commercial) £150
- Hourly rate (Community) £10
- Daily Rate (Community) £85
- Above daily rates based on 8 hours let any time between 9am and 10pm
- Hot desking by a small monthly subscription – details to be calculate

13. Evaluation & Monitoring

Each element of the promotional strategy will be recorded, measured and evaluated, so the most effective tools can be identified and used to best advantage.

14. The Management, the Organisation and The People

The RCA is a community company, Limited by Guarantee,

Registration No It has been granted charitable status, Charity No.

1089745

The RCA will have by 5 Trustees as set out in Clause 1

The RCA will represent the voice of the Rudloe community in seeking to restore the building and retain the 'Green' area for the benefit of the community.

The RCA will conduct regular Board Meetings and will seek to bring together key partners such as police, housing associations and local councillors to discuss and solve any community issues.

The RCA trustees will be selected for their Community experience and business skills that can be used in running and managing the Rudloe community centre.

The RCA board of Trustees will also deal with any personnel issues. One member of the committee will be appointed to be responsible for the development of volunteers and partners.

15. Potential additional funding sources

The RCA intends to seek financial support from the following, in addition to partner organisations, in order to establish a firm business foundation:

- National Lottery
- Wiltshire Council – to cover any capital costs in making the building fit for use such as roof repairs, window repairs and ensuring the heating system is in working order before taking the lease
- Box PC – Dickens Gate S106 contribution
- Corsham CAB
- Corsham Town Council –(noting that the location of the Rudloe Community Centre is on the edge of the Corsham.Box boundary and will be available for use by Corsham residents)

16. Executive summary

The Trustees of the RCA believe they have put together a robust and sound proposition, working with selected partners to deliver a financially sustainable model with provision of some key community services from the outset which can be built upon over the coming years.

The RCA has strong community support for the reopening of the Centre and will provide some key services to the community, helping to ease the cost of living crisis and through volunteer groups and individuals, will add significant value to the sense of belonging for residents of Rudloe

The Centre will also provide an informal meeting place and community hub which will add a new vibrancy and sense of belonging to an often isolated and neglected area.

Appendix 1

CBC is a registered charity and has been in existence for 200 years this year. They have over 200 committed members and about another 100 regular attenders to the Church as well as over 400 regular users of their services – some from the Rudloe community. They are in a financially strong position with a turnover of around £300K and capable of taking on this responsibility. Full accounts can be provided.

CBC currently provide services to the community in Corsham which include, apart from Sunday worship meetings, youth and children's services and activities, a thriving toddler group, a community shop and café (free to people who cannot afford food and a café environment at no cost – tea, coffee, cakes and lunches) with only voluntary contributions requested. This latter service is run with support from Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Community Foundation Grant funding, local supermarkets and other individual, local, generous donors. There are activities for older folk and a

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regular Wednesday service with tea, coffee and cake. CBC also run a debt advisory service as well as a system of grants through a benevolent fund they have set up to support people in short term extreme hardship which could be particularly helpful for those in difficult financial circumstances. They also run a minibus service for those who cannot access the services without transport.