

REPORT from the Wootton Bassett Shadow Community Operations Board (SCOB)

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Area Board Special Meeting: Monday 19th September 2011

A. BACKGROUND TO THE CAMPUS PROGRAMME

1) Cabinet Decision

At the 15 February 2011 Cabinet meeting, councillors approved a programme of work to deliver community campuses across the county and to develop and test alternative solutions to the management of public services. The Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Community Area was identified for inclusion in this first phase of work which is being referred to as the 'preliminary management project'.

2) The Shadow Board and the campus programme

The Wootton Bassett Shadow Community Operations Board (SCOB) has been formed by the area board to represent the community throughout the development of the proposals for a community campus for the Wootton Bassett area. Separate proposals are being developed for a Cricklade campus.

The SCOB consists of an elected member from the area board, a town/parish council representative and members of various community groups to make sure it can represent the wider local community area effectively.

3) What is a campus?

Community campuses will be developed through input from local people ensuring each campus is as individual as the community it serves. They will provide the services communities need in one easy-to-access location – placing customers and their needs at the heart of future plans.

These campuses could be new buildings or greatly-improved and developed existing buildings. In other cases the proposal is to look at

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community-run leisure facilities which could be expanded to accommodate additional services or facilities.

The aim is to make maximum and efficient use of the council's buildings – both new and existing – and create campuses that deliver more for local communities.

B. ROLE AND WORK OF THE SHADOW COMMUNITY OPERATIONS BOARD (SCOB)

The SCOB continues to celebrate people's enthusiasm for a community campus for Wootton Bassett and the surrounding communities. The Wootton Bassett and Area SCOB membership was decided by the Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board on the 12th April 2011 and formally ratified at an Area Board on the 24th May 2011, with the inaugural meeting on the 25th May 2011 to discuss the campus work programme. The SCOB primary focus since then has been to deliver two consultations in the most comprehensive way possible. While these have not been blanket surveys, the SCOB has worked hard to reach people across every part of the area and in every section of our community.

During the first consultation we invited participation from local schools, groups, clubs and organisations and reached out to every parish in the area; we used social media; and invited people to complete an online questionnaire.

The second consultation sought to validate the findings of the first and six separate consultation surgeries were held; three of these allowed groups to book slots and make a presentation of their needs to SCOB members; while three were open for people to drop in without any need for an appointment. The SCOB also received written reports, which form part of the ongoing narrative; while other people chose to use a second online questionnaire.

The 6th July 2011 meeting of the Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board was an important milestone in the journey of the Wootton Bassett and Area Community Campus! The positive outcome of that meeting has enabled the SCOB to move forward with its second consultation, which has confirmed our working proposal.

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The SCOB has worked hard to make the two consultations as comprehensive as possible, while seeking to deliver its results within the timetable of the project. While the consultations may not be considered comprehensive enough by some, the SCOB believe the proposal, which is inspired by the consultations, properly reflects the needs of the whole community.

The challenge of this second consultation period has been to ensure that groups and organisations have had an opportunity to get involved, while challenging others to make decisions and fully engage with the Community Campus proposals.

The SCOB is made up of servants of the community who are appointed by elected councillors and since our first meeting as a shadow board on the 25th May 2011, the members of the SCOB have grown in confidence, deepened their understanding of the issues and found the resolve to see this project completed. The Officers of Wiltshire Council offer practical support to the SCOB and the elected members of the Area Board make the decisions.

From the first meeting when we sat and felt somewhat bewildered, through the first consultation and presentation of the working proposal, and now after the second consultation, SCOB members have put sleepless nights behind them and inhabit a place of growing optimism that the new Community Campus is possible.

The leisure centre situated at the Lime Kiln has an historic past and we do well to remember that it was built by local people. Recent history has underlined a commitment to offer hospitality to people beyond the normal confines of the area. Our vision for the Wootton Bassett and Area Community Campus is a set of facilities on two sites that will develop that legacy of hospitality. If there is any legacy from our work with the Liturgy of Repatriations, it is to give thanks for the amazing community spirit. We must honour the past while offering something new and exciting for the future.

Learning to speak a new language as been more exciting than daunting! And the broadly positive reception of the working proposal has given heart and enthusiasm to the SCOB. The SCOB record their thanks to the groups and individuals who have joined the discussion

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and the Wiltshire Council officers, whose professionalism is an essential tenet of our work.

C. CONSULTATION SURVEY RESPONSES

The response to the first consultation was proof that people care about the provision of services we are setting in place for the future.

1) First Consultation

Listed below are some of the findings from that first consultation:

- 67.9% favour a campus which includes several council services; 19.3% said they were unsure and 12.8% were not in favour: from the narrative answers people do not want the library services moved from the town centre.
- 94.3% want a leisure centre that includes a swimming pool.
- 88.2% want outdoor all weather courts – tennis, netball, football, and basket ball.
- 74.2% want a café.
- 70.8% want the campus to include a public meeting/function rooms/activity space.
- 67.6% would like youth services included.
- The three most important things that would enable access to the services are cost of services, opening times and session times.
- Important considerations in the design and travel planning are car parking on site, good cycle paths and storage together with bus stops near the campus.

Included in the corpus of material from the first consultation was a stream of narrative, all carefully recorded by members of the SCOB. Comments about the need for library facilities, young people's activities, leisure facilities, children's activities and a swimming pool were the things most commented on across eighteen separate categories.

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2) Second Consultation

The results of the second consultation are set out below under three headings essential, desirable and nice to have - confirm what we discovered during the first consultation: there is widespread support for a community campus established on two sites; one in the town centre of Wootton Bassett and one in the area known as Lime Kiln.

ESSENTIAL

- 95.2% support locating the library in the town centre.
- 96.4% support locating the leisure services and facilities in the Lime Kiln area.
- 93.4% support a swimming pool with potentially six lanes.
- 59.6% support the need for a gym.
- 47.6% support outdoor sports space.
- 44% support the need for community hall provision.

DESIRABLE

- 45.2% support the need for a café.
- 24.7% support a Skate Park.

NICE TO HAVE

- 7.8% support a soft play area.
- 6.6% support a crèche area.

D. CONSULTATION NARRATIVE AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Findings from the Narrative

As well as those who completed the online questionnaire, the SCOB also received another stream of narrative. Among the things most commented about were sports provision, young people's activities, library provision, the needs of young people, community hall and meeting room provision, swimming pool provision and a Wheel Park. Alongside the SCOB's consultation, Wiltshire Council are also engaging

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in conversations with leisure services, library services, registration services, youth services and learning disability services.

There was concern to make the leisure aspects of the campus accessible for disabled people, something that the current building is unable to do adequately: a new building would enable proper consideration to be given to the needs of the physically and mentally disabled.

There was a general consensus that improved sports hall provision would encourage groups to keep tournaments local and an enlarged sports hall would increase the number of groups able to use the facility at one time.

Community hall provision (with WiFi) would allow their use for community groups and for business meetings and small conferences, which would create the possibility of developing the use of the whole campus.

The SCOB will recommend that the library and associated services remain in their current location, albeit refurbished. And that the other services associated with the campus are located in a new building in the area of Lime Kiln. The SCOB believe this ambitious proposal is possible and would encourage that Wiltshire Council be asked to explore all possible funding options for a new, custom built, facility.

2. Consultation Discussions

Among those groups who presented detailed written and/or presentations in person were Wiltshire Police, Citizens Advice, Wiltshire Carers, Wootton Bassett Bridge Club, Talking Newspapers, Wootton Bassett and Lyneham Friendship Club, The Community Church, the Skate Park Group, Wootton Bassett Town Council, Otters Swimming Club, the Volley Ball Club, the Hockey Club and the Netball Club. It was clear from these discussions that people are enthusiastic for a Community Campus. The desire among people is for a split site campus and the use that is made of the library in its current location bears this out.

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In developing a business plan for such an ambitious project the SCOB understand the need for partnerships and among those who might be approached are: the Ministry of Defence - there are many retired service personnel living locally, as well as those who will serve the new Defence Training Centre at Lyneham; the Wootton Bassett Town Council; Wootton Bassett School - with their new academy status might be able to access grants not otherwise available; together with other groups and organisations committed to joining the campus journey.

According to the current Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Wiltshire, Wootton Bassett has one of the fourteen most deprived areas in the unitary authority. The town is, for example, within the top 10% of the most deprived areas in terms of working age adults with few or no formal qualifications. Improved community facilities for these and other disadvantaged people of all ages is essential and the challenge is to work across the disciplines to make the new Community Campus a space all residents would want to utilise.

Public health is the responsibility of the council and sports provision that people can access and take pride in, has the potential to draw people in with consequent benefits to health. We need to ensure that the disabled are encouraged to use the facilities, both those with physical and mental disabilities.

E. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY THE SCOB

Library Services: Being in the library during the consultation surgeries highlighted to members it was clear how well used this service is and all those who responded to the consultation stressed the need for this service to remain in its current location.

Flexible Community Hall: From the responses to the consultation there is a clearly identified need for a modern community hall that has proper disabled access and that ideally should be equipped with moveable room dividers to provide for maximum usage. An audit of all community hall provision across the town highlights this need.

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Indoor and Outdoor Sports Space: An enlarged sports hall, with the possibility of including spectator galleries would increase usage. While there has been provision for spectators within the swimming pool area, no such provision has ever been made for other indoor sports limiting the use of the existing sports hall for competitive events and thus wider community use, across a number of different sports. There is also a clear need to improve the outdoor facilities, for example by restoring provision for netball and tennis, and possibly providing additional facilities for younger age groups such as a skate/BMX park.

Leisure facilities that include a gym and dance studios: The current gym is in need of much refurbishment and the consultation has highlighted a need for better equipment and provision of high quality dance studios. There is a desire to encourage people who currently travel beyond the town to 'shop' local! Developing and improving the gym facilities could help to build links and usage of these by those in the area who currently do not feel the Lime Kiln has anything for them.

Café provision: Possibly combined with provisions for small children, this facility would help create an environment where people would want to gather and spend time together.

Swimming Pool with six lanes and a Learner Pool: with improved access for disabled swimmers: Our consultations have revealed a need for improved public access to swimming facilities alongside existing club usage. With the continuing development in the area, a six lane swimming pool with a separate learner pool would help meet longer term community needs by ensuring adequate public swimming can co-exist with lesson and club swimming.

Besides increasing available pool area, further physical improvements to swimming facilities, such as ramps and/or a moveable floor would help enable better access for both disabled swimmers and swimmers of varying age and ability.

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F. THE SCOB PROPOSAL

The SCOB has worked carefully through the material garnered from the two consultations and believes that a spilt site campus, comprising library and other services in their current location in Boroughfields and a new building for leisure, community hall and other services in the Lime Kiln area of Wootton Bassett is the right solution. Set out below is our rationale for requesting a new campus building, as opposed to simply redeveloping the existing Lime Kiln Centre. We recognise this is an ambitious proposal but it is the one which we consider most worth pursuing:

- The advanced age of the existing Lime Kiln Centre building structure, makes its short and long term sustainability questionable;
- The available land area at the Lime Kiln Centre as is, for providing a new community hall, an enlarged sports hall(s), outdoor sports facilities and extended swimming pool provision together with adequate car parking – is very restricted;
- A new build scenario would enable the continuity of existing indoor sports facility service provision with either no or minimal disruption during construction work;
- A new or green field build scenario would provide increased opportunities to incorporate a full range of sustainable construction and energy saving features such as ground source heat pumps, rainwater recycling etc thus ensuring that longer term sustainability issues can be fully addressed and making the campus development more attractive to any potential partners (e.g. WB School, Police, NHS, MOD, WBTC) through reduced future maintenance and operational costs;
- A new build scenario offers the best opportunity to fully provide, not only for present, but also potential increased future usage and/or service delivery needs by ensuring that adequate potential expansion space is available for any likely future expansion of facilities or services that might be provided from a campus site and minimising the need for any separate facilities that might otherwise arise in the longer term;
- A new build scenario would maximise the opportunity for developing shared car parking arrangements between the various service providers and user groups thus maximising land potential by minimising total overall car parking requirements.

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G. The SCOB's proposal is to develop a split campus site comprising:

- 1. A community services campus facility located in the current library building in Boroughfields to include:**
 - **library services**
 - **meeting rooms and flexible space for use by the community**
 - **other community services to be identified**

- 2. A new campus building in the area of Lime Kiln to include:**
 - **Flexible community hall provision**
 - **Indoor and Outdoor sports space**
 - **Leisure facilities that include a gym and dance studios**
 - **Café provision**
 - **Swimming Pool with six lanes and a Learner Pool: with improved access for disabled swimmers**

H. NEXT STEPS FOR THE SHADOW COB

Next steps for the Shadow COB

Should the Area Board chose to approve the proposal from the Shadow COB, the next phase of work the Shadow COB might look to undertake could broadly encompass the activities outlined below.

- Establish broad high level principles
 - Equalities Assessment
 - Design principles
 - Travel principles

- Further develop campus proposal
 - Begin more detailed conversations with a range of partners and services who may use space in a campus
 - Consider initial feasibility studies that will assess existing infrastructure and services

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Equalities Assessment

It is important for the Shadow COB to have a good understanding of the makeup of local communities, and to understand any factors that may either help support or encourage people in accessing services or facilities in a campus facility or prevent them from doing so.

The Wootton Bassett Shadow COB have already started to consider the work required to support an equalities assessment, and, assuming approval of the proposal by the area board, will look to hold a public meeting/workshop to talk with people in the local community about accessing services and facilities in a campus. To support this discussion, the Shadow COB equalities working group will be inviting individuals and representatives of groups who have an interest in equalities or who have specific needs in terms of accessing services.

Feedback from the proposed workshop will be used to inform the design and travel principles for the Wootton Bassett campus and also to inform the feasibility study and interrelation of services and facilities in a campus.