

Agenda Item 12 - Bradford on Avon Area Board - 11 May 2016

Proposal for Asset Review and Community Hub Scoping Report

1. Background

Wiltshire Council is currently delivering an £80 million capital build programme of community campuses in 8 locations across the county.

A campus is a building, or buildings, in a community area where people can access local services more easily and in ways that better suit their needs.

The aim is to deliver more for local communities by making maximum and efficient use of council buildings – both new and old.

A Shadow Community Operations Board (COB) was formed and undertook extensive research and local consultation. In 2014 the Bradford on Avon Area Board received a presentation on the findings from the Phase 1 community consultation which demonstrated demand for community facilities such as a gym, better library and museum facilities, greater access to community ICT, studio space and an outdoor performance area, amongst other things, to be provided in Bradford on Avon town centre. Details here

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityandliving/communitycampuses/bradfordonavoncommunitycampus.htm>

However the project was not selected by the Cabinet of Wiltshire Council for inclusion in the capital build programme 2014-17 and, with no resources available for further research, the COBs were eventually disbanded.

Wiltshire Council is committed to funding a second wave of developments in other communities but these likely to be on a more modest scale than has been seen, for instance at Corsham and Melksham, and these are being branded as “community hubs” or “health and wellbeing centres”. The growing constraints on local government funding will probably ensure that future projects will require pooled investment from a range of public and private sector partners and increasingly the Council is sharing its buildings with other statutory services such as Police, Fire and NHS as part of streamlining and co-location measures.

2. Asset Review

The previous consultation work was generic and strictly non site-specific. To move this to the next level, the next phase of work will need to include the mapping of publicly-held assets together with options for investment and service improvement.

Increasingly Wiltshire Council is divesting itself of assets (and liabilities) where land and services are deemed to be of non-strategic value and not core to its business. In recent years an active programme of asset transfers from the unitary authority to the town council and community groups in Bradford on Avon has included Westbury Gardens; Culver Close Recreation Ground, Bowls Rink and Pavilion; Barton Farm Play Area; Sladesbrook Recreation Ground and allotments; public toilets at Station Car Park and at St Margaret's Car Park; Newtown Car Park and Budbury Car Park.

The Town Council has aspirations to take on the local ownership of further properties and services, as its capacity to do so grows, but currently Wiltshire Council is wanting to retain its strategic assets which include the Library and Museum, the Swimming Pool, the Youth and Community Centre; Station Car Park, St Margaret's Car Park, Barton Farm and the Country Park.

Other publicly-held land and services in the town centre include the Fire Station (where the Police are also co-located), the Health Centre, the Railway Station and St Margaret's Hall, which are all in fairly close geographical proximity.

3. Community Hub

As part of the mapping of assets and ownerships, options will be explored for the more efficient use of existing public buildings as well as for new investment in the public realm.

Discussions and site visits will be held with public sector partners to ascertain the scope for co-operation, co-location and joint investment.

Opportunities for to lever-in private sector investment will be explored.

Design ideas will be commissioned with a brief to respect the historic character of the town, enhance its urban design, and retain conformity with the Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Next Steps

It is proposed to establish an Assets Working Group made up of officers and councillors of Wiltshire Council plus representatives of other relevant public sector bodies.

The key task will be to procure an asset review and community hub scoping study during the 2016/17 financial year.

In-house officer time can be assumed but some design expertise will need to be bought-in at an estimated cost of £ 10,000.

Recommendation

The Bradford on Avon Area Board agrees to:

- i) Establish an Assets Working Group, reporting to the Area Board
- ii) Prepare a consultancy brief and procure an asset review and community hub scoping study
- iii) Contribute staff time and £ 5,000 cash in 2016/17, to be matched by partner contributions

Report by Peter Dunford

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