

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-044-2009/10

Date of meeting: 16 November 2009



Portfolio: Leisure and Young People

Subject: Limes Farm Hall

Responsible Officer: Julie Chandler (01992 564214).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That Cabinet considers the options presented for potential development of Limes Farm Hall and agrees Option 2b as the preferred option for implementation;**
- (2) That officers continue to seek external funding from partner organisations to meet the majority of the capital costs of the redevelopment proposals;**
- (3) That, subject to recommendations (1) & (2), Cabinet agrees in principle Capital Funding in 2010/11 towards any shortfall on the development works required by means of a reallocation from the Customer Services Transformation Programme;**
- (4) Subject to the above, that Cabinet seeks District Development Fund (DDF) provision totalling £27,000 as part of the Budget process 2010/11 to meet the ongoing costs of management of the hall;**
- (5) That Cabinet approve the submission of a planning application to Development Control Committee for the preferred option scheme;**
- (6) That competitive tenders are sought for the works to enhance the provision of facilities at Limes Farm Hall in accordance with the Cabinets preferred scheme; and**
- (7) That a further report on the revenue funding arrangements from partner organisations and the required capital contribution from the Council, be received prior to the letting of any building contract for the redevelopment of the hall.**

Executive Summary:

The management and administration of Limes Farm Hall, Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell, was transferred back to the District Council from Chigwell Parish on 31 March 2009. At its meeting in November 2008, the Cabinet agreed to meet the costs of management and essential repairs to Limes Farm Hall over the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, via DDF provision totalling £47,520.00. This decision was taken to ensure that community use of the Hall was retained, whilst its' longer-term future determined.

To meet with the recommendations of Cabinet, a series of multi - agency stakeholder and partner meetings have been held over the last year, to: consider the opportunities to improve front line services to Limes Farm Community; identify potential development opportunities for

the existing community hall and, highlight potential funding streams to support this. These meetings have involved representatives from Essex County Council; West Essex PCT; Limes Farm Community Association; Essex Police; Chigwell Parish Council; Limes Farm Junior and Infant Schools; East Potential; London & Quadrant Housing; the Councils' Housing, Community Development and Safer Communities services and Grange Farm and Chigwell Community Trust.

The consensus of opinion across the range of partners' correlates with the findings of consultation undertaken with local residents, in that Limes Farm would benefit significantly from provision of centralised multi-agency services. These to include: Housing (Council and Housing Association); Benefits Advice; Primary Health Care Clinic; Police Office/ Safer Community surgeries; Children's Centre; Young Peoples 'space'; Community Development and facilities for the Community Association.

Following an interim report to Cabinet on 29 June 2009, Members requested the commissioning of an Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study for potential development of Limes Farm Hall, to include an investigation of both capital and revenue costs. Norfolk Property Services were appointed to undertake this work via the Council's procurement hub. This work has been funded from ECC Extended Schools Funding. This report advises Members of the outcome of the feasibility study and seeks approval for any preferred option.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Cabinet has agreed that it is desirable to continue to provide a community facility on Limes Farm due to issues of deprivation and disadvantage. However, the current facility does not meet local need and requires significant investment to remain operational in the short to medium term.

Other Options for Action:

To not support the proposed development and the current relatively poor quality provision is maintained at an annual subsidy but this would require investment of £60k for repairs.

The Council to withdraw financial support to the hall and therefore it would close at the end of the financial year.

The Council seeks to dispose of the hall for alternative use or redevelopment.

Report:

Background

1. Limes Farm Hall is a 1970's community building that is located in the centre of Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell. The building is functional, but requires significant investment for internal and external modernisation/improvement and complete roof replacement. It is currently used for a range of local groups and organisations and local residents in general. The District Council owns the building and land that it is situated on.

2. The Hall was managed and maintained by Chigwell Parish Council, under a management agreement spanning the last 11 years. However, in April 2008, Chigwell Parish Council notified the Council of its intention to cease management of the Hall as from June 2008. This was understood to arise from difficulties experienced in making the facility cost effective and general management problems encountered. The date for the transfer was however extended by negotiation, to 31 March 2009.

3. The Council has managed Limes Farm Hall since 1 April 2009 under DDF budget provision, which has enabled administration of bookings; caretaking; general operating costs and essential maintenance works.

Local Need

4. Consultation with local residents and stakeholders indicates that the hall is inadequate for the current and future needs of the local community, and that a better community facility is thought to be an essential requirement for Limes Farm.

5. A range of partners provide services from buildings elsewhere on the estate and are keen to work closer with the Council and each other, to improve service delivery for local residents. This would include: NHS West Essex transferring their clinic services to a central location and providing additional outreach work for families and young people in conjunction with partners; Essex Police operating their community policing in conjunction with Safer Communities; Essex County Council extending their existing Children's Centre activity; London and Quadrant Housing providing front of house services alongside the Council's Housing and Housing benefits Services.

The Feasibility Study

6. In accordance with Cabinet's wishes, the Essex Procurement Hub was utilised to identify suitably qualified consultants to undertake an options appraisal and feasibility study for the potential development of the Limes Farm Hall.

7. In the event, Norfolk Property Services were engaged. The company have not only undertaken site and building condition surveys, but have consulted with a wide range of local stakeholders, who have an interest in any new provision.

8. Norfolk Property Services were tasked with looking at four broad options, namely:

(i) refurbishment of the existing facility;

(ii) refurbishment and extension of the existing facility;

(iii) demolition of the existing building and re-provision of new build to accommodate a youth space on the same footprint; and

(iv) demolition of the existing facility and re-provision of a larger new build to accommodate a multi-agency community facility.

9. The outcome of the feasibility study is attached. In total some five options have been identified as Option 2, Refurbishment and extension of the existing facility has two sub options (a) and (b), offering different scales of new provision. Indicative floor plans have been developed for each of the options demonstrating the type of accommodation that could be provided and the range of activities/services that could be accommodated.

10. An analysis of the main advantages and disadvantages of each option are outlined along with an estimate of the capital costs of the refurbishment. (The cost projections have been supported by a detailed schedule of rates breakdown, prepared by the consultant's quantity surveyors).

11. In evaluating each of the options, Members will have to balance the aspiration to provide enhanced community facilities for Limes Farm, which is an area of need (particularly

the re-provision of youth facilities which currently operate from a 12 year old Portakabin) against the constraints on the Council's resources, in what will undoubtedly be a very challenging few years for the Council, particularly with respect to revenue expenditure.

12. Notwithstanding, the Council has agreed as part of its Medium Term Financial Strategy that it would prioritise capital investment in those areas which had a revenue benefit. Whilst under the Council's direct management since April 2009, the level of income generated by the hall has been trebled. However the age and condition of the building make it inefficient in terms of heating, lighting, etc. Any of the options identified by Norfolk Property Services would make the building more sustainable and reduce ongoing maintenance costs. Moreover, if the building could be improved to include other partner agencies, the opportunity would therefore arise to share the core costs.

13. Whilst it is a decision for Members to decide on the most suitable option, the view of the officers managing the project is that Option 2(b) would appear to achieve the best balance between enhanced provision and affordability. At an overall capital cost of £1,062,000 not only could a significant new facility for young people be provided, but the general community could also benefit greatly, not only through more immediate access to the range of services provided by the Council and partner agencies, but by the positive effect of having a community facility to be proud of. Option 2(b) would provide a focus for the community on Limes Farm Estate, deliver a one-stop shop for accessing advice and services, and demonstrate that the District Council and other agencies are serious about meeting the needs of residents.

14. The Finance & Performance Management Scrutiny Panel is shortly to revisit the work undertaken by the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel. The Panel recognised the importance of retaining access to services in satellite locations across the District, and were concerned about any move to centralise services at the Civic Offices, albeit accepting that the reception areas of the Civic Offices should be rationalised.

15. Currently contained within the Capital Programme is an allocation of some £2.1m for the Customer Transformation Programme. Based on Members earlier consideration, that the focus of Customer Services improvement should be around reducing unavoidable contact and improving the response to telephone and electronic enquiries, it is therefore unlikely to be agreed that the full amount of capital provision would need to be spent on alterations to the reception areas at the Civic Offices. There is, therefore, an option for Members to potentially re-allocate capital resources to the Limes Farm Hall Project, as it would achieve the same objectives of improving access to and customer satisfaction with the Council's Services.

Resource Implications:

A sum of £270,000 has already been secured from Essex County Council Extended Schools Funding, with £250,000 being allocated towards the building capital costs of new or improved community facilities and £20,000 revenue towards the design/options study and procurement costs.

Partners involved in the proposed development have committed to contributing the revenue costs of their premises within a new building and this would be via facility rental agreements. Officers are also actively pursuing additional capital contributions from partner organisations and external funding sources to offset the cost of the project to the District Council.

However, a contribution from the Council Capital Programme may well be required, depending on the option chosen and the level of other contributions, up to a maximum sum of £812,000 if the recommended Option 2(b) is to be pursued. This figure takes account of the

£250,000 capital contribution secured from Essex County Council i.e. cost of £1,062,000 minus £250,000. It is anticipated that an 'in principle' funding commitment from the District Council for 2010/11 would additionally act as a lever to secure other external funding for the project, which may reduce the costs to the Council.

Officers are now pursuing funding from Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, which if successful, will provide £50,000 Capital towards the youth 'space' as part of any new development and revenue funding of £150,000 for:

- (a) costs of providing mentoring and support for young people to encourage them to undertake training and skills;
- (b) provision of one-off grants to enable these young people to access professional training courses; and
- (c) 3 year facility management costs of operating the youth space to enable it to be accessible on 7 days per week.

A development plan for this proposal is currently being produced in conjunction with Essex County Council Youth Service and Tottenham Hotspur Foundation.

At this stage it is difficult to be certain about the exact revenue implications of the new build. Norfolk Property Services are still working on the figures, which will be available for Cabinet. Notwithstanding the improvements in income, because of the timescale for any new development scheme, DDF will be required in order to keep the building open up until it may have to close for redevelopment. This is anticipated to be £27,000.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council currently employs a caretaker who would be able to service the new provision but however, would be subject to redeployment/redundancy in the event that the hall was to close.

The options for management of the new facility on Limes Farm are as included within the attached Options Appraisal report.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

It is anticipated that quality of life and community respect would be improved for all residents on Limes Farm if a new community facility was provided and that this would have an impact on anti social behaviour on the estate. In addition, the new facilities would enable the provision of new opportunities including learning and skills for people of all ages, therefore increasing opportunities to change lives significantly and particularly for young people currently not in Employment, Education and Training.

Consultation Undertaken:

An extensive range of consultation has been undertaken with local residents and stakeholders, including specific face- to- face consultation with young people, families, the elderly and the range of stakeholders and partners involved.

Background Papers:

Limes Farm Cabinet Report November 2008.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

There is a significant risk that if a decision is taken to close Limes Farm Hall and not re-provide a community facility, incidences of anti – social behaviour may increase and community response will be negative. In addition, the decision to withdraw this community facility would adversely affect the Council's reputation as a key service provider. Members should also note reference to the Corporate Risk Register item No. 17 'provision of Capital Resource to a non-revenue generating asset'.

Equality Impact

The provision of a new community facility on Limes Farm would enable the Council to widen access to its core services and therefore improve equality of service provision for the elderly and many socio -economically disadvantaged residents. In addition, young people at risk of social exclusion would specifically be supported in terms of their integration within the community and wider society and people with disabilities would have much improved access to the building through design adjustments to meet with DDA.

Appendix 1

FEASIBILITY REPORT

**LIMES FARM COMMUNITY HALL
LIMES FARM
GRANGE HILL WARD
CHIGWELL**

**Prepared for
Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices
High Street
Epping
CM16 4BZ**

2.0 Options

Summary of options, key advantages & disadvantages, and respective building costs

***NB. These figures are estimated project costs and do not include VAT
Costs are calculated at 3Q2009 construction rates***

Option 1

Refurbish and remodel the existing accommodation.

Main advantages:

- More efficient use of existing accommodation
- Improved internal and external aesthetics
- Improved parking provision
- Improve energy performance and running costs
- Initial improvement to maintenance costs

Main disadvantages:

- No improvement to community service delivery
- Costly refurbishment and repairs required
- Restricted improvement to space efficiency

Summary of Total Project Costs – Option 1

Refurbish & remodel existing community hall including necessary repairs & new landscaping to entire site

£ 486,886.68

Option 2a

Refurbishment and extension to front of premises to provide Youth Space

Main advantages:

- Improved Youth service delivery
- More efficient use of existing accommodation
- Improved internal and external aesthetics
- Improved parking provision
- Improve energy performance and running costs
- Initial improvement to maintenance costs

Main disadvantages:

- Limited improvement to community service delivery
- Costly refurbishment and repairs required to existing premises
- Restricted improvement to efficiency of community hall accommodation
- Existing premises location restricts size and layout options for extension

Summary of Total Project Costs – Option 2a

Refurbish & remodel existing community hall & front extension to provide Youth space, including new landscaping works

£ 677,779.80

Option 2b

Refurbish existing premises and extension to front to provide offices for the Housing & Benefits Teams and Police / Safer Communities Office and extension to rear to provide Youth Space

Main advantages:

- Improved community service delivery including, dedicated youth space, Housing, Benefits, Police & Safer Community offices; Children's Centre and conference room to be used for PCT health clinic
- More efficient use of existing premises
- Improved internal and external aesthetics
- Improved parking provision
- Improve energy performance and running costs
- Initial improvement to maintenance costs
- May provide secure external activity area for Children's Centre

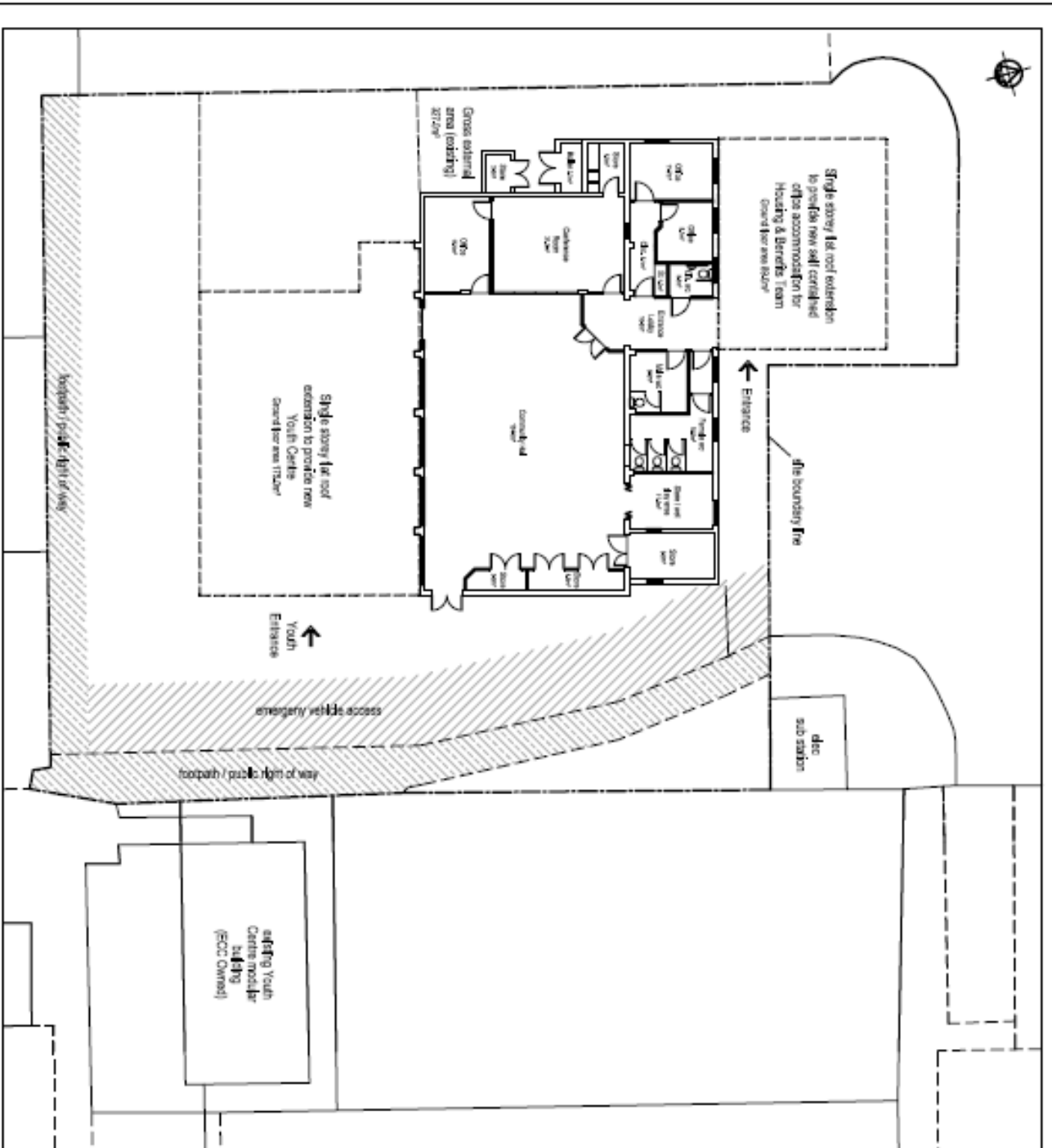
Main disadvantages:

- Costly refurbishment and repairs required to existing premises
- Increased construction costs
- Existing premises location restricts size and layout options for extensions
- Restricted improvement to efficiency of community hall accommodation
- Restricted parking improvements
- Potential office unit rental income may be restricted by current location

Summary of Total Project Costs - Option 2b

Refurbish & remodel existing community hall & front extension to provide Youth space, with rear extension providing Housing & Benefit Team Offices & possible Police office, including new landscaping works

£ 1,062,557.30



OPTION 2b

REFURBISH & REMODEL EXISTING COMMUNITY HALL
 FRONT EXTENSION TO IMPROVE YOUTH ACCOMMODATION
 REAR EXTENSION TO PROVIDE HOUSING / BENEFITS OFFICES
 & POLICE / SAFER COMMUNITIES TEAM OFFICE

NOTES
 1. The client has not yet decided whether to extend the existing building or build a new building. This plan is based on the assumption that the existing building will be retained and extended.
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PROPOSED BLOCK PLAN 1:200 SCALE

NO	DATE	DESCRIPTION
NPS SOUTH EAST LTD		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Development/Extension/Refurbishment/Extension/Refurbishment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construction/Refurbishment/Extension/Refurbishment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structural/Refurbishment/Extension/Refurbishment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interior/Refurbishment/Extension/Refurbishment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Exterior/Refurbishment/Extension/Refurbishment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other/Refurbishment/Extension/Refurbishment	
nps/group		
PROJECT	LIMES FARM COMMUNITY HALL	CLIENT LIMES FARM DISTRICT COUNCIL
SUBJECT	PROPOSED BLOCK PLANS	DATE OCT 09
PROJECT NO	09-5064	SCALE A3
	05	DATE OCT 09
		BY MGS

Option 3

Demolish existing premises and provide new build two storey accommodation over similar footprint.

Main advantages

- Overall improvement to community service delivery including full Children's Centre provision
- Increased community confidence
- Overall improvement to efficiency of space
- Improved internal and external aesthetics
- Improved parking provision
- Improve energy performance and running costs
- Improved maintenance costs

Main disadvantages

- Some restriction to overall service delivery
- Improvement to future service delivery still limited
- Restricted parking improvements
- Increased construction costs
- Potential office unit rental income may be restricted by location

Summary of Total Project Costs - Option 3

Two storey new build over similar footprint to provide new community hall, office accommodation for Housing & Benefits Teams full Children's Centre accommodation and dedicated youth space.

£ 1,818,738.78

Option 4

Demolish existing premises and provide new build multi-agency community facility with improved local service delivery from Epping Forest Council; West Essex PCT; Essex Police and Essex County Council

Main advantages

- Purpose built facility to maximize community service delivery
- Increased community confidence
- Improve energy performance and running costs
- Improved maintenance costs

Main disadvantages

- Site constraints may limit layout potential for new accommodation
- Increased construction costs
- Restricted parking facilities
- Potential office unit rental income may be restricted by location
- Agency letting potential may be limited to community service operations only

Summary of Total Project Costs - Option 4

New build low rise purpose built Multi-Agency premises to provide local key community services

£ 2,528,967.53

