



CABINET - 13th OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED COMMUNITY HALL IN TY SIGN, RISCA

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcome of a public consultation exercise relating to a proposal presented by Agape Community Church, Ty Sign (ACCTS) to develop a new Community Hall on land at Holly Road, Tŷ Sign, Risca (shown edged black at Appendix A).
- 1.2 To seek the views of Cabinet on the request to lease land at Holly Road, Ty Sign, Risca for the purposes of building a new community hall.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has been approached by ACCTS to support the development of a new purpose built Community Hall in Holly Road, Tŷ Sign, Risca on land currently held by the Housing Revenue Account. ACCTS have identified a number of funding options to meet the estimated costs of a new building of circa £550,000 and are seeking a lease of 99 years from the Council at a low, non-commercial, rent.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 7th July 2021 Cabinet received a report in relation to the proposal from ACCTS and requested that a consultation with Community Groups and residents be undertaken to get a better understanding of the level of support within the community.
- 2.3 Responses to the public consultation reflected a lot of opposition to the proposal with 91% of those who gave a view disagreeing that the Council should lease the area of land. It is therefore proposed that the request from ACCTS is not progressed.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As a result of the outcome of the consultation, and in accordance with the wishes of the community, it is recommended that Cabinet do not support the request from ACCTS and that Officers are authorised to notify ACCTS that the request to lease the land in question is declined.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To reflect the views of the community as demonstrated by the public consultation.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 At its meeting of 7th July 2021 Cabinet received a report detailing a request by the Agape Community Church, Ty Sign (ACCTS) seeking the Council's support to develop a new purpose built Community Hall in Holly Road, Tŷ Sign, Risca on land held by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (on the land shown edged black at Appendix A). ACCTS have assembled funding to meet the estimated project costs of £575,000 including in principle commitments of £90,000 from the Big Lottery 'People and Places Grant' and £250,000 from the Welsh Government Community Facilities Grant.
- 5.2 ACCTS intend that the new facility will be open to the community for use and have identified a number of potential users/uses including after school clubs, Risca Community Comprehensive School, OAP Clubs, training/meeting space for businesses, Job Club, private hire for parties/wedding receptions. Planning permission has been obtained for the proposed development, which consists of:
- A building of 225 sq m, with a main hall of 150 sq m
 - A kitchen, large enough to cater for groups of up to 60 people eating in the main hall.
 - A meeting room
 - Toilets and storage space
 - An entrance lobby
 - Car parking for 15 cars, including two disabled spaces.
- 5.4 The site of the proposed new community hall shown at Appendix A is currently a park known locally as "Spar Field" and is held by the Housing Revenue Account. ACCTS are seeking a lease from the Council of 99 years at a low, non-commercial, rent.
- 5.5 As can be seen at Appendix A, across the road from the site of the proposed new community facility is the St David's Shared Church, Ty Sign. This building is split into three parts, the upper hall, the chapel and the centre (formerly the manse). The Centre @ St David's received planning permission for change of use in 2020 in order to operate as a community resource. The Channel View Community Centre is approximately 500 metres away from the site of the proposed new facility. The TLC Community Café is also open and is situated nearby at 76 Elm Drive which can be seen on the location plan at Appendix A.
- 5.6 In considering this proposal at its meeting of 7th July 2021 Cabinet received a report in relation to the proposal from ACCTS and requested that a consultation with Community Groups and residents be undertaken to get a better understanding of the level of support within the community.
- 5.7 A public consultation began on 9th August 2021 running for a period of 6 weeks and ending on 19th September 2021. The consultation consisted of an online questionnaire with hard copies also being made available within the community. A total of 1,285 questionnaire responses were received. The Report of the Consultation is included at Appendix B. A petition opposing the proposal with approximately 453

signatures has also been submitted to the Council. An online petition on the Change.org website entitled "Save Spar Field Ty-sign Risca" was started on 4th August and had 919 signatories on 20th September.

- 5.8 Of those who gave a view 91% disagreed and 8% agreed that the Council should lease an area of land at the Spar Field, Holly Road to allow a new Community Hall to be built. For those who disagreed the main reasons given were loss of green space, that they would not use the facility, increased traffic, and that there were already enough facilities. Of those that agreed the main reasons given were that they would use the new facility and that existing facilities do not offer the activities they want.
- 5.9 Additional correspondence was received from operators and occupiers of other community facilities including St Davids Church Hall, TLC Café, and the Risca Covid-19 Volunteers expressing concerns about the impact of an additional facility on existing facilities and these are included in Annex 5 to the consultation report at Appendix B. An email was also received from ACCTS in support of their proposal on 22nd September 2021 and this is included in full at Appendix C of this report. As can be seen from all the correspondence, there are claims and counter-claims on both sides of the argument.
- 5.10 Cllr. Bob Owen is Trustee and Treasurer at Channel View Community Centre Management Committee and on being consulted upon this Cabinet report responded by stating that the ACCTS comments regarding the use of Channel View Community Centre are factually incorrect in as much as:
- Risca Covid-19 Volunteers (RCVUK) are 'end-users';
 - nowhere near 30% of the space is occupied by RCVUK;
 - the committee has granted an office space, nothing more;
 - the Tiny Tots group are now up and running as are AGAPE;
 - the main hall has not been reduced in size, there is currently an overhang of RCVUK equipment to the one end of the hall but RCVUK are currently seeking a container to store this external to the building (at their cost). It is sectioned off and it has not affected hall bookings / usage;
 - the car park does not have fewer spaces;
 - The management committee have continued to work with Agape as they are (always will be) welcome to use the centre, but similarly to RCVUK they are ultimately end users.
- 5.11 Since the proposed letting of the land is a disposal of land held under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), consent to the disposal under sections 32-34 of the Housing Act 1985 will need to be obtained prior to entering into any lease. Caerphilly Homes have advised that previous negotiations relating to the site involved the release of land adjacent to Hafodybryn, which was also the site of the Channel View Community Centre and scout hut. This site was considered to have some development potential by Caerphilly Homes for affordable housing. Whilst any agreement on a lease could be conditional on the lease of the scout hut being released, this is no longer an option as the scouts are not a party to the current proposal.
- 5.12 Cabinet have previously considered and given 'in principle' support for similar proposals, most recently on 27th March 2019, which did not ultimately progress. Caerphilly Homes highlight that in 2019 the Channel View Community Centre building was identified as not currently fit for purpose as a result of structural, locational, and functional problems that could not be addressed and it was proposed

to be closed. The proposed new facility was seen as a potential alternative but that also no longer seems to be the case. The 2019 report that went to Cabinet highlighted that, subject to valuation, an option existed to dispose of the existing Channel View site to develop affordable housing. The associated capital receipt would go into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or the land would be earmarked for future development of Council housing.

- 5.13 The potential benefit to the HRA has significantly reduced with this latest proposal. The HRA is a ring-fenced budget that is funded from tenants' rents to support the delivery of an effective and efficient housing service through maintaining and improving the Councils housing stock, there is little benefit to tenants or to the HRA resulting from this proposal.
- 5.14 Where a council is considering disposing of any land consisting or forming part of an open space under s.123 of the Local Government Act 1972 they must give notice of their intention to do so in a newspaper circulating in the area in which the land is situated, and consider any objections to the proposed disposal which may be made to them. Should Cabinet be minded to support the proposal in principle any material objections as a result of the public notice procedure will be included in a further report. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, as this relates to a disposal of land used for residential purposes (or capable of being used for that purpose), any final decision to dispose of land in these circumstances will be a decision of Full Council.

5.15 **Conclusion**

This proposal represents an opportunity for the development of a new community hall largely funded by external grant. The outcome of the public consultation indicates that the proposal is not supported by the community. Operators and occupiers of existing community facilities have expressed their opposition to the proposal. The land in question is held by the HRA and Caerphilly Homes consider that this proposal offers little benefit to tenants or to the HRA. It is therefore recommended to Cabinet that the request to the Council from ACCTS is declined.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 Should Cabinet decide to support the ACCTS proposal it is assumed that any material objections as a result of the public notice procedure required under s.123 of the Local Government Act 1972 where a council is considering disposing of any land consisting or forming part of an open space will be brought to Council in a further report. It is also assumed that consent to the disposal under sections 32-34 of the Housing Act 1985 will be obtained from Welsh Government prior to entering into any lease.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been carried out in relation to the request from ACCTS. The IIA sets out a number of potential positive impacts of the proposal as it represents an opportunity for a new, modern, fit for purpose, community hall to be built in Ty Sign. The IIA notes that the facility provides an opportunity, through the delivery of a range of programmes and activities, to improve upon a range of outcomes which include, mental and physical health, education and employment opportunities, along with supporting those most in need. However, the public

consultation attracted a number of representations about the impact of the proposed new facility on existing community groups and the potential negative impact on the viability of the venues that they operate from and these concerns are reflected in the IIA.

[Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report. Any responses received from other consultees have been incorporated into the report accordingly. A public consultation was undertaken for 6 weeks from 9th August 2021 and the full Report of the Consultation is included at Appendix B.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Local Government Act 1972.

14. URGENCY

14.1 The decision will be subject to the “call-in” procedure.

Author: Rob Hartshorn – Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Consultees: Mark S. Williams – Corporate Director, Economy and Environment
Cllr Ross Whiting – Risca West Ward Member and Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure
Cllr Lisa Phipps - Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr Nigel George – Risca East Ward Member & Cabinet Member for Waste, Public Protection and Streetscene
Cllr Arianna Leonard, Risca East Ward Member
Cllr Philippa Leonard, Risca East Ward Member
Cllr Bob Owen, Risca West Ward Member
Councillor D.T Davies, Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
Councillor A. Hussey, Vice Chair of Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
Jeff Reynolds – Sport & Leisure Services facilities Manager
Jane Roberts-Waite - Strategic Co-ordination Manager, Housing
Kevin Lodge – Community Centre Services Manager
Rob Tranter - Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan – Head of People Services

Anwen Cullinane - Senior Policy Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language, and Consultation)
Steve Harris - Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
Mark James – Principal Valuer

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report – “Proposed community centre in Ty-Sign, Risca to replace the Channel View Community Centre” 14th March 2018
Cabinet Report - “Proposed community centre in Ty-Sign, Risca” 27th March 2019
Cabinet Report – “Proposed Community Hall in Ty Sign, Risca” 7th July 2021

Appendices:

Appendix A: Site of Proposed Community Hall, Holly Road.
Appendix B: Report of Consultation
Appendix C: Correspondence from Agape Community Church, Ty Sign (ACCTS) dated 22nd September 2021