



## **CABINET – 13TH NOVEMBER 2019**

**SUBJECT: ACQUISITION OF VIRGINIA PARK GOLF CLUB PREMISES**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek in principle Cabinet approval to acquire the former Virginia Park Golf Club Premises in Caerphilly for the purposes of providing non-residential education and training, subject to a successful change of use planning application from D2 Assembly and Leisure to D1 Non-residential institutions.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 An opportunity has emerged for the Council to acquire the former Virginia Park Golf Club building in Caerphilly.
- 2.2 The building holds the potential to provide a suitable base and accommodation for statutory education activities including youth work within the Caerphilly basin as well as providing a platform for the delivery of education and training opportunities for vulnerable young people unable to attend school.
- 2.3 In order for the building to come into Local Authority ownership, the Council is required to lift a covenant on the land and, in doing so, would forgo a potential future capital receipt in the region of £300k in the short term.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve in principle the acquisition of the former Virginia Park Golf Club premises and its use as a base for youth work, education and training, subject to planning for a change of use being granted to D1 Non Residential Institutions.
- 3.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Head of Property Services to negotiate an agreement on the best possible terms with Withey Properties on the transfer of Virginia Park Golf Club premises in to the Council's ownership.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The availability of accommodation of this nature within the Caerphilly basin provides the Council with an opportunity to transform the support available to young people in the area.

## 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 An opportunity, as outlined below, has arisen to acquire the former Virginia Park Golf Clubhouse (Clubhouse) which is situated immediately to the south of Caerphilly Leisure Centre. It is considered that this building would provide very suitable accommodation in a good location from which to provide a wide range of support to young people in the Caerphilly region.
- 5.2 Virginia Park Golf Club, which is currently owned by Withey Properties (WP), closed to members some time ago, although the driving range and clubhouse continued in use. Outline planning permission for the residential redevelopment of the site was secured in 2019.
- 5.3 The land on which the golf course was constructed was previously owned by the Authority and the land transfer to WP in 1998 included a covenant restricting the use of the land to a golf club, driving range, clubhouse and ancillary leisure facilities.
- 5.4 Given that outline planning consent has now been secured the Authority is willing to negotiate release of the restrictive covenant. Precedent set by previous negotiations suggests the release would attract a capital receipt of circa £300,000. In the alternative, WP have indicated that they would be willing to offer the Clubhouse and limited car parking in exchange for removal of the restrictive covenant. The facility would then become a Council asset with a book value estimated to be in the region of £250k-£300k.
- 5.5 Should the golf club building and car park be transferred to the Council it would provide the opportunity to deliver enhanced support to young people in the Caerphilly region. This would include support for young people experiencing mental health issues, deprivation-related support, Welsh language development, crime and anti-social behaviour reduction, support for those with protected characteristics (including LGBT young people), homelessness and NEETS reduction. The facility would also offer greater scope for open access youth work.
- 5.6 The close proximity of the building to Caerphilly Leisure Centre, the Y Gwindy School site and Social Service's Caerphilly base would enable stronger collaborative working with stakeholders as well as providing greater opportunities for the provision of physical activity, additional support for the Welsh language and enhanced opportunities for social workers requiring additional support for younger clients.
- 5.7 The premises, which incorporates parking and some space for outdoor activities, would operate across the youth work delivery period, inclusive of daytimes, evenings, weekends and school holiday periods. The facility would be operated by a Youth Service cluster team and, in school hours, tutors and other support personnel.
- 5.8 The acquisition of the golf club building would provide the potential for the Youth Service to move out of other accommodation within the Caerphilly Basin and to centralise and coordinate service provision from a single base.
- 5.9 Should Cabinet approve the recommendations set out within this report the Head of Property Services will negotiate an agreement with Withey Properties on the transfer of Virginia Park Golf Club premises into the Council's ownership on the best possible terms. Separately, a change of use application would be made by the Education Service.
- 5.10 Should the change of use planning application be successful and the building transfer into Council ownership, some minor alterations to the fixtures and fittings of the building would need to be made. It is proposed that this should be funded from Education Reserves.
- 5.11 It is intended that the premises would be phased into operation throughout the summer of 2020 and has the potential to become a significant centre for the Wellbeing development of young people in the Caerphilly area.

## 5.12 Conclusion

The acquisition of the golf club building would provide a unique opportunity for Council to transform the services it provides to the young people of Caerphilly. While its acquisition requires the Council to forgo a potential capital receipt in the short term, doing so will provide multiple benefits to the young people of Caerphilly as well as enabling the Youth Service to withdraw from other premises and provide joined up services from a single location.

## 6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 That the Head of Property Services is able to successfully negotiate an agreement with Withey Properties.
- 6.2 That change of use will be granted.
- 6.3 The valuation of the covenant and the golf club and car park are accurate at a point in time but could be subject to change over time.

## 7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 Youth Service Plan 2018-2021.
- 7.2 Education Service Improvement Plan 2019.
- 7.3 Statutory duties for the participation of children and young people under the children and families measure, Wales 2010.
- 7.4 CCBC Engagement and Progression framework
- 7.5 **Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

The recommendations contained in this report link with the CCBC Corporate Plan as follows –

### **Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all.**

Youth Service provision and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) are statutory education requirements: The transfer of existing assets to the new site will significantly benefit children and young people in terms of accessing more joined up education support, improving standards of attainment, helping those who are not able to follow a traditional attainment path, support learning that enables youth and employment, improve the learning environment and the better safeguarding of young people in order to create a climate for learning, particularly for those most vulnerable.

### **Objective 2 - Enabling employment.**

The repositioning of education assets in a more centralised location will enhance current arrangements for the prevention and resolution of NEETS (Not In Education, Employment or Training) challenges for those in the 11-24 age range by providing a single location in which to base dedicated NEETS-reduction youth workers.

### **Objective 3 - Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's well-being.**

The Youth Service's new Homelessness Lead Workers are planned to operate from this site and in so doing, to have a profound impact on the prevention of youth homelessness in the

area and also on existing youth homelessness in the Caerphilly Town area. The Youth Service's Youth Information team will be relocated to these premises and offer related support across the Caerphilly basin area. The Youth Service's new Wellbeing team will operate in part from this location, working with young people in the area who require mental health support. The Wellbeing objective number Seven applies here - Prevent Homelessness and tackle rough sleeping.

**Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment.**

The central location of the Virginia Park premises will directly improve access to services by young people, including those who cannot currently access, due to limited transportation opportunities, the forms of youth work necessary for their wider educational and wellbeing development.

**Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.**

Significant aspects of youth work delivery from the site will be based around the theme of Health, with physical activity a key aspect of the curriculum for both Youth work and EOTAS forms of education – emotional/mental health aspects will also form a substantial element of delivery.

**Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being.**

The support for young people to become independent and improve their wellbeing is central to the move to this location, aiming to create a more comprehensive and collaborative advice and information system and create meaningful conversations that reduce the need for higher tier interventions.

## **8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

8.1 The report and its recommendations contribute to the Well-being Goals in the following manner:-

**Prosperous** – the recommendations in this report link with the creation of learning environments which develop skilled and well-educated young people, prepared for employment and training and adulthood.

**Healthier** – the wider education input achievable via the relocation to this centre will allow for a deliberate focus on the improvement of both mental and physical health, achieved via the provision of both suitable facilities and appropriately skilled staff.

**More Equal** – the centre will be accessed by young people of various life circumstances, including those disadvantaged for varying reasons. The work at the centre will assist all to realise their potential but most especially those restricted from doing so at present.

**Cohesive communities** – the youth Service's crime and anti-social behaviour work will be enhanced by the addition of this provision, allowing for a presence in Caerphilly town and across the basin area that does not at present exist. Significant challenges exist in the town area and a youth Service presence in this location will contribute to keeping local communities and the community of young people safer through partnership working with agencies such as Gwent Police.

**Vibrant culture** and thriving Welsh language – plans for the occupation of the premises include the creation of a dedicated Welsh language youth club, operated in close coordination with the adjacent Y Gwindy school site – the Youth Service’s Welsh partnership with the Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Caerffili Menter Iaeth would be extended in this regard, further contributing to the authority’s Welsh language strategy.

This report is, in addition, is consistent with the five ways of working in the following ways –

**Involvement** – by means of the Youth Service’s/Authority’s adherence to the Participation Charter and the LEI’s Inclusion principles, young people will be involved in identifying their needs and will have significant influence regarding the delivery of services.

The **Longer Term** aspirations connected with this work include the contribution to enabling young people to develop into confident, able learners and citizens and able to independently make their way in the world.

The work to be located at Virginia Park would be **Preventative** in nature, with regards to the re-engagement of young people otherwise falling outside the education system, experiencing poor health or becoming involved in anti-social behaviour

The combination of teaching and youth work that will feature as an integral part of the centre’s operation represents a level of service **integration** not previously achieved but explicit within the Education Directorate’s intentions and plans as featured within the Shared Ambitions education strategy. Such **collaboration** will provide wraparound support for young people in the daytime, evenings, weekends and throughout the year.

## 9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 No discrete Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has yet been completed in relation to this proposed acquisition but those with Protected Characteristics would directly benefit from its operation by Caerphilly Youth Service/Education Services.

## 10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The acquisition of the Clubhouse in lieu of a capital receipt would result in the loss of a payment to the Authority of circa £300,000. The acquired building would, however, have a book value of up to £300,000.
- 10.2 The most recent condition survey of the building indicates the backlog maintenance on Virginia Park totals £28,750. Approximately 50% of this work would need to be completed before the premises were to become fit to begin delivery operations. It is proposed that Education Service reserves would be utilised to meet these costs.
- 10.3 The necessary revenue budget to operate the facility moving forward would be met from within current Education and Lifelong Learning revenue budget.

## 11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Any personnel implications associated with this report will be based around the relocation of staff and reconfiguration of existing roles and are outlined in the Youth Service’s Business Improvement documentation. Newly introduced and external grant funded posts will also be located in these premises.

11.2 For employees required to relocate their base of employment, the authority's excess travel scheme will apply if appropriate.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

12.1 At no point in the related processes within the Youth Service or elsewhere have any views been expressed that differ from the recommendations contained in this report.

## **13. STATUTORY POWER**

13.1 Local Government Act 1972.

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