



CABINET - 7TH July 2021

SUBJECT: PROPOSED COMMUNITY HALL IN TY-SIGN, RISCA

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of 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 1).
- 1.2 To authorise officers to enter into further discussions and to undertake a full consultation to ascertain what level of support there is within the local community for an additional community facility in the area.

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 There are a number of existing community facilities in the locality and the impact on the viability of these of a new facility is not known. The level of support with the community for a new facility is also not known. To assist the Council in considering the request to lease the land it is proposed to undertake a consultation with Community Groups and residents to get a better understanding of the level of support within the community.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet support a full consultation with all Community Groups and residents to establish what support there is within the local community for this proposal for an additional facility in the area.
- 3.2 It is recommended that a further report be presented to Cabinet following the period of consultation and associated feedback.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To seek and allow for full consideration of the views of the community on the proposal for a new community hall in Tŷ Sign, Risca.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council has been approached 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. Other funding sources include Garfield Weston (£25,000), Welsh Churches Fund (£5,000), All Churches Trust (£10,000) Beatrice Laing Trust (£5,000), Joseph Rank Trust (£20,000), and Bernard Sunley Foundation (£10,000). Private individuals have pledged over £100,000 towards the costs. Recent tenders have come in at higher than originally estimated as a result of inflationary pressures in the building sector and ACCTS intend to borrow the shortfall.
- 5.2 ACCTS is a non-denominational, evangelical church with some 40 members, which has been in existence for more than 30 years. ACCTS are a registered charity, and work closely with other churches in the area. They provide a 'Street Pastor' service for Risca with Moriah, Bethany and Ty Isaf Baptist churches, and work with the national charity 'Christians against poverty' and with Moriah Baptist and Bethesda Baptist (Rogerstone) to provide a debt relief service to the Risca and Caerphilly areas. 109 people have accessed the service; 31 people in the area have become 'debt free'. The same partners have supported a job club and a 'Fresh Start' group, helping those with life controlling dependencies. Members of the church also founded a group in Risca called 'SHADE': Self help against Depression and Anxiety.
- 5.3 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. The Authority may wish to consider restricting the permitted use and sale or transfer of any lease by absolute covenants.
- 5.5 The Channel View Community Centre is approximately 500 metres away from the site of the proposed new facility. The Channel View Community Centre building is a very old building, is generally in poor condition, and lacks many of the features of

modern buildings such as high levels of energy efficiency and insulation. However, it currently has good usage and a proactive management committee. The car park was resurfaced last year and some improvement works are currently in progress, including new toilets, at a cost of approximately £25,000.

- 5.6 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 hall is used throughout the weekday mornings and some afternoons by Dewi Sant Playgroup and is open for hire and has been used by other community groups. The Centre @ St David's received planning permission for change of use in 2020 in order to operate as a community resource. Caerphilly Council has recently provided funding of just under £4,000 to upgrade the kitchen so that healthy eating, activities can be run from the centre. 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.
- 5.7 The viability of all community facilities in the locality must be a consideration. However, this is difficult to assess. Existing facilities are well used, but the impact of the pandemic over the last year or so has changed usage with the Risca Covid 19 volunteers now operating out of Channel View Community Centre, for example. It is not known whether there is sufficient demand to sustain all facilities within the community.
- 5.8 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. Such consent would be sought from Welsh Government following agreement of Heads of Terms.
- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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.

5.12 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 determination on this matter will be a decision of Full Council.

5.13 **Conclusion**

This proposal represents an opportunity for the development of a new community hall largely funded by external grant. 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. The implications of a new facility on existing community facilities or the level of support within the locality is not known and therefore a public consultation is proposed to help to understand this.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 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 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 is not known. The IIA identifies that a consultation with community groups and residents would assist in understanding any impacts.

Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment:

https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/IIA/IIA_ProposedCommunityResourceCentreTySign

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. Comments were received from Cllr Bob Owen and as these were quite lengthy these have been included in full at Appendix B. Any responses received from other consultees have been incorporated into the report accordingly.

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

Appendices:

Appendix A: Site of Proposed Community Hall, Holly Road.

Appendix B: Comments from Cllr Bob Owen