

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROJECT

### NOTES TO AID DISCUSSION AT MEETING 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2022

#### **Current Status**

1. The recent community opinion poll result means that the proposed funding plan to add £200k to the already agreed £300k for a Public Works Loan cannot now happen. 32% of households responded with 67% of those that responded against an increase in precept.
2. The planning application has been updated to reflect the design included in the project business plan and presented at the December community consultation. This is not a detailed design that could be used for tender purposes. To progress this to the detailed design would cost a further £35k from earmarked reserves.
3. Planning application approval for both the NHF development and the community centre / village green is anticipated to be granted later this year.
4. A few parishioners have offered suggestions on how we might raise funds via N&V, elements of each are included below.

#### **Where does this leave the project**

1. Nothing has changed the need for a new facility now and for the future.
  - a. The current facilities remain limited both in terms of space and availability and the reality is that they are not fit for purpose even without the pre-school. The current limitations continue and are likely only to get worse. To quote one parishioner, the project should “enables the pre-school to flourish, the school to flourish and the parish to have the sort of social and recreational facilities that it needs”
  - b. The community continues to grow:

<b>Age range</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2020</b>
0 - 17	230	213	200
18 – 64 (2000 17 – 59)	690	917	1059
65+ (2000 60+)	370	358	451
<b>Total</b>	<b>1290</b>	<b>1488</b>	<b>1710</b>

***These numbers do not include the 90 NHF houses***

- c. Significant levels of housing will be required in Marden as can be seen from the consultation currently being carried out by Herefordshire Council on the county’s spatial requirements. The Core strategy update is looking at a further requirement of 11,500 houses to be built in Herefordshire before 2041 and, regardless of any NDP in place, Marden will have a significant requirement for further building. Since the current NDP has been in place we have been able to restrict planning approvals outside of the defined settlement boundaries, sites not approved include 70 houses on what was the cricket pitch, up to 50 houses on land opposite the Volunteer, HMO dwelling to house up to 850 seasonal workers replacing the current caravan, 45 houses and a care home on land owned by Marden Court Farm, 29 houses along the Burmarsh road, further small developments at Rose Villa, next to

the Old School and, in Burmarsh and Litmarsh. Many, and possibly others, are likely to be submitted again.

- d. Importantly, the Academy and Pre-School will continue to grow and require additional classrooms. Both are vital to the sustainability of the parish.
2. The current poll result leaves the project with a funding issue but does not affect the project overall, we need to look at other ways to fund the project, the question may be one of timing given that, even with funds, little can be done in the short term given the phosphate issue.

**What are the potential options** (some elements may be non-starters, but all possibilities should be considered)? Likely need a combination of all options. The delay in planning approval gives us time to evaluate the funding options.

1. With a small number of vocal parishioners questioning the need for two facilities it might be worth looking at the lease structuring again to see if there is any way to channel the “clawback” money, currently about £260k and growing, into the project funds.

*It is important to note that the original concept at the start of the project in 2015 was to relinquish the current facilities leaving the Academy and Pre-School to reside permanently in one building with no safeguarding issues. A new stand-alone community centre and village green would be built on NHF gifted land with the ability to rent the Academy Sports Hall weekday evenings and at weekends (this could be subject to a new lease arrangement).*

The funding model for the original concept would have come from a combination of the clawback, Lottery funds and/or public works loan, other grants and local fundraising and donations.

The clawback was discounted because the Academy could not pay the MVT and even if they could the MVT could not pass the funds received to the parish council. ***Is there a way around these fundamental obstacles?***

To move on and be able to present a holistic solution to parishioners, the original concept needs to be revisited and would require all parties (Academy, MVT, PC, Pre-School (and ultimately Herefordshire Council) to sit round a table, agree all the issues and develop possible solutions.

One possibility might be the restructured of the current leases in such a way as to allow the Academy to cover the clawback payment to Herefordshire Council.

If this could be achieved then it would essentially, in funding terms, cover the additional £200k public works loan rejected in the poll

2. There is potential to either reduce the overall project cost or at least mitigate further potential increase due to a volatile economy created by Brexit, the pandemic and now the war in Ukraine.

When the planning application is approved the hope is to sit down with the developer of NHF estate and discuss several key topics:

- a. Would they be interested in building the community centre as part of the site wide work and if so at what costs (would still have to tender). This option would likely lead to a significant reduction in overall project costs.
  - b. Even if the developer has no interest in the build itself there are several areas of synergy that can be explored which should reduce overall costs, examples being, services to the site, use of the community site while the main build takes place.
3. Regardless of potential funding described above it is important that the project looks to community fundraising as we have been doing until the pandemic hit. Fundraising group currently holding non-profit community events but following planning approval would look to ramp up fundraising activities.

The project should look for local benefactors (individuals or businesses).

Other grant funders such as Tarmac.

### **Round Table Discussions needed**

Known challenges:

#### Academy

- a. Expanding and will need more space which is limited although there are foundations for two more classrooms
- b. Has little funds available for capital other than a portion of NHF S106, limited own reserves
- c. Needs more operational funds and would like to join the Federation
- d. Clawback clause is a liability (and currently growing) that could stop it joining the Federation
- e. Needs Pre-School as pupil feeder

#### Pre-School

- a. Expanding and needs both the current space and approved external classroom
- b. Issues remain with having to store at end of day etc.
- c. Limited capital funds / reserves

#### Marden Village Trust

- a. Tied into leases with Academy
- b. Relinquishing leases requires:
  - a. One year's notice

- b. All leases together or none at all
- c. MVT constitution requires meeting of parishioners and 66% to agree to the proposal
- c. Pre-School currently provides roughly half of total income

Marden Parish Council

- a. Can raise money by a low interest fixed rate public works loan but limited with most other grant funders
- b. Unsure if can agree a lease with MVT for building for a significant sum but principle seems sound – check with NALC and Charity Commission
- c. May not have “The General Power of Competence” for some time. This could restrict the ability of the Parish Council to take certain actions.