

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Executive

18 October 2022

@TheOldDeanRec

Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans
Strategic Director/Head of Service	Nick Steevens
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Wards Affected:	Old Dean
Key Decision:	No
Date Portfolio Holder signed off the report	28 September 2022

Summary and purpose

Surrey County Councillor Trefor Hogg has approached Surrey Heath Borough Council with a proposal to use the unused rooms within the Old Dean Pavilion to provide a small local run junior library and community facility offering soft drinks and toilet facilities called @TheOldDeanRec which is highly accessible to the most deprived area of Old Dean, situated immediately next to the playground facility which was renovated in 2020. @TheOldDeanRec would be run by volunteers, and it is hoped to make it available on weekdays after school hours, the weekends and school holidays.

While Old Dean Community Group will be happy to provide the support needed to help setup @TheOldDeanRec, a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) has been created to run it day to day in order to provide the dedicated focus it will require and also to firmly place its management with local individuals in the community who have a strong and continuing personal investment in its success. A CIO will provide the most appropriate not for profit legal basis and allows for donations to the project. Three trustees are already in place.

The building itself will continue to have shared used and the shower and changing facilities will still be used by the local football team so a small income will continue to create a revenue for the Council for the hire of these facilities. The internal central door will be locked so the building can be divided and both parties will have their own separate entrance.

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that the Council enters into a lease arrangement with @TheOldDeanRec registered charity group applying a community rent subsidy as outlined within the report to support establishing and delivering their services.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 This building has historically been used as shower and changing facilities for the local church football team but unfortunately has also been targeted with repeated bouts of vandalism and graffiti which has cost the Council significantly in repairs. It has recently been refurbished following the latest break in and is now in an acceptable standard, although some further work would be desirable to the small kitchen area and toilets which @TheOldDeanRec are prepared to carry out. On the advice of our insurers, we have now installed an intruder alarm along with CCTV and since fitting, we have had no further issues to date.
- 1.2 It has been identified that low levels of education, training and skills are major factors driving inequality in the Old Dean Estate particularly in the area surrounding the Old Dean Recreation Ground. The problems start with Oracy and Literacy of children entering the school system where both skills are at a low level at home. At the same time income deprivation is a major factor preventing travel to the library facilities provided in Camberley Town Centre. This proposal is aimed at providing a small local community run Junior library and community facility which will be highly accessible to the most deprived area of Old Dean.
- 1.3 By allowing @TheOldDeanRec to use the facility as a community hub will give the residents a focal meeting point and it is hoped that this will alleviate the facility being seen as a target for anti-social behaviour.
- 1.4 There are currently no toilet facilities open to the public so by having this facility open during the busy periods will be beneficial to the whole community.
- 1.5 This pavilion has been advertised for lease or hire on numerous occasions over the years and despite initial interest, no further proposals have been forthcoming.
- 1.6 The initial proposed hours of operation would be from 15:30 to 17:30 on Weekdays and 12:00 to 16:00 at Weekends. Opening hours will depend on the availability of volunteers to staff @TheOldDeanRec but it is felt that these hours are achievable.
- 1.7 Old Dean Community Group have a Restricted Account with the sum of £3557 which must be spent on purposes related to the Wimbledon Road Playground. It is likely that the Old Dean Community Group Trustees will be willing to transfer this money to the @TheOldDeanRec project as it will significantly enhance the usefulness of the playground to the benefit of the inhabitants of Old Dean. This will then provide some of the initial monies to cover the start-up and initial operation of the facility. Grants will also be sought from grant giving organisations to help provide the initial finance required to improve the interior of the premises and support the setting up costs.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 Surrey Heath Borough Council currently maintain the facility but the building is a continued target for anti-social behaviour, thus costing the Council significantly in repairs and insurance claims.
- 2.2 By giving the local volunteers ownership of this unused facility will bring social cohesion to the children and parents on the Old Dean Estate.
- 2.3 @TheOldDeanRec will have access to grant funding which could lead to long term future investment for the continued use of this facility.

3. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 3.1 Allow @TheOldDeanRec to use the building for a junior library and community hub however in doing so they agree to share the utility costs and contribute towards the insurance costs for the building during the period of their trial.
- 3.2 Charge the Charity a subsidised rent for the period of their trial however this financial burden along with the operational costs may make the trial non-viable from the outset.
- 3.3 Not pursue the venture and leave the space as is which could result in further vandalism.

4. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy

- 4.1 To nurture the strong sense of community across the whole borough, fostering a sense of respect and consideration. We aim to ensure everyone can access a safe, quality home to meet their needs. We will take a positive approach to supporting all sectors of our community, including those who are most vulnerable. We will promote active and healthy lives for all and a rich programme of cultural and community events.
- 4.2 Our five year strategy suggests that by working with the voluntary sector that more can be achieved by working together. This would be an opportunity to demonstrate that by supporting this charity that this policy is being applied in practice.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 Commercial rental for this property has been valued at £2250 per annum. The building has been empty for a number of years (10+) with no demand for a lease
- 5.2 The proposal to support the charity would be for the charity to receive a community rent subsidy to reduce the commercial rent to a level that supports the charity to get an established operational group for Surrey Heath.

- 5.3 Due to this being a trial to deliver a children's community library in an area of deprivation, it is proposed that a one year rent free period be applied.
- 5.4 Internal cost implications would only be for legal to agree the lease and an ongoing landlord/tenant relationship. There would also be a small amount of admin in respect of recharging a percentage of utility costs.

6. Section 151 Officer Comments:

- 6.1 The financial implications are outlined in the above report.

7. Legal and Governance Issues

- 7.1 The lease will be prepared by Legal Services and contain provisions to reflect the Heads of Terms agreed with @TheOldDeanRec trustees and other provisions associated to a community lease.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments:

- 8.1 Approval to grant community leases is delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

9. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

- 9.1 This charity will work responsibly to enable environmental improvements giving back to the local community,

Equalities and Human Rights

- 9.2 The facility will provide a safe space to engage with the local community and help children gain oracy and literacy skills.

Risk Management

- 9.3 By working with @TheOldDeanRec will revitalise the facility area will ensure the longevity of the building as a whole thus reducing the risk of the pavilion being a continued target for vandalism.

Community Engagement

- 9.4 The Old Dean Community Group has engaged with the local community who are all in support of the project and they have received many offers of support from volunteers who would like to become involved in the project.

Annexes – Annex A – Proposal Summary

Background Papers – None