

Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust - Request for financial support for proposed Health and Wellbeing Hub, Chapel Lane

Background

At the meeting of the Community Services Committee, held on 9th November 2022, the Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust made a presentation in support of their proposal to take over from Dorset Council the management of the Children's Centre and Adult Day Care Centre on Chapel Lane as a community health and wellbeing hub. Council has been broadly supportive of this concept for some years, having approved the Trust's Business Plan at its meeting held on 27th January 2020. The Committee passed the following resolution:

TO RECOMMEND:

That, subject to additional information being made available by Dorset Council, the Town Council considers providing grant funding to Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust in support of the proposed Chapel Lane wellbeing project.

This project clearly fulfils the Council's corporate objective to provide opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, which was supported by 93% of respondents to the recent consultation on the draft Corporate Plan. The consultation document included a statement that the Town Council will 'Support Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust's Wellbeing Project, including the potential transfer of the Day Centre and Children's Centre to community ownership'.

The project is also in support of Policy CF (Community Facilities and Services) of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1, which seeks to safeguard existing facilities and services. As acknowledged in paragraph 230 of the Swanage Local Plan (2017) 'Maintaining facilities and services in a relatively isolated location is one of the key challenges facing Swanage, and this is particularly true for a number of publicly-owned services which are currently located in the town'.

Further to their presentation to the Community Services Committee, the Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust have supplied the information attached at Appendix 1 in support of their funding request. SPDT estimate that the initial shortfall that it will need to bear in the first years, will be £42,000 per annum, and they are seeking a commitment from the Town Council to underwrite 50% of this for the first three years, i.e. £21,000 per annum.

This arrangement would be very similar to the agreement that the Town Council entered into with the Trust in February 2016 in support of the transfer of the former Youth Centre. Under that arrangement the Town Council made a grant to the Trust of £17,500 per annum, commencing at £20,000 in 2016/17 and reducing to £15,000 in 2018/19. Since that date the premises, which has been transformed into 'The Centre', has not required any further financial support from the Town Council.

In 2016 the Town Council relied on Section 19 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1976 to fund the youth centre. Since that date the Town Council has gained the General Power of Competence (GPC) which enables the Council to do anything that an individual can, except where there is a statutory bar. The Town Council can therefore rely on the GPC to make a grant to the Development Trust in support of the Chapel Lane project.

The recommendation of the Community Services Committee highlighted the importance of obtaining further information from Dorset Council regarding their support for this project. Officers and councillors have attended meetings with representatives of Dorset Council's Children's Services over recent months and it is clear that they have a strong determination to see this succeed. There are plans to operate a Family Hub from the Chapel Lane premises, Dorset Council only having to pay for the space required in the future rather than covering the costs of operating the entire premises.

However, as of yet, Dorset Council have been unable to quantify their contribution. It is understood that there may be a difficulty in respect of the implementation of Dorset Council's Asset Transfer Policy, which prevents Dorset Council from contributing to the operation of a premises following its disposal to a community organisation. The Trust's funding request is made on the assumption that this problem can be overcome and that Dorset Council will continue to be a key partner in the future of this community building. Other potential partners include the NHS and Lewis-Manning Hospice.

Decision required:

To debate the recommendation from the Community Services Committee that the Town Council should consider providing grant funding to Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust in support of the proposed Chapel Lane wellbeing project, and if that is agreed to determine whether to include a sum of £21,000 in the draft budgets for 2023/24 and the two following financial years.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

December 2022

Proposed Health and Wellbeing Hub, Chapel Lane – Request for financial support

Further to the presentation to the Community Services Committee, by Swanage and Purbeck Development Trust, on 9 November, this report is prepared as a summary for Full Council and a further update on progress. SPDT are requesting financial support to enable it to enter into an Agreement with Dorset Council to take on the management of the existing Children’s Centre and Adult Day Care Centre in Chapel Lane, following an Asset Transfer from DC. The decision by DC on the Transfer is imminent, following the submission of a formal Application by SPDT on 8 September 2022.

In summary

With the aim of protecting and enhancing Health and Wellbeing services, in the local area, SPDT is proposing to take on the management of these underused assets and attract Statutory, Local Authority and Voluntary services to operate from a single site, in a joined-up way. Appropriate users of the space will be offered cost based, occupational terms, with space bookable from a single desk for 2 hours up to weekly or monthly occupation of a full range of sizes of accommodation. In this way, suitable organisations will have a flexible, cost-effective solution, bookable on-line, to make it an attractive option for delivering Health and Wellbeing services, locally.

In addition, a large Community Café will be included for public use. There will be an emphasis upon creating an informal meeting environment for local organisations and professionals to meet their clients and contacts in a warm and cosy atmosphere.

Trained receptionists will manage the main reception to welcome users of the space but also act in a Signposting capacity for local people seeking initial help with health and wellbeing issues and are uncertain about how to access them.

Timelines

SPDT is proposing that once an Asset Transfer Agreement is reached, it is prepared to enter into a Tenancy at Will, to allow it to go into occupation while legal documentation, on a Transfer, is in progress. This will allow time for alterations to be planned ready for full occupation, when the Transfer has completed.

It is anticipated that the first 6 months of occupation, seen as a “Transition” period, will allow SPDT to start setting up the management of the space to accommodate early users, including DC Departments, Lewis-Manning Hospice, who are showing serious interest, and other organisations interested in early occupation.

The subsequent 6 months will allow project planning for alterations and decoration to accommodate full occupation once the Asset Transfer is complete, which is anticipated within 12 to 18 months.

SPDT predict that the completed Health and Wellbeing Hub would be ready for full occupation by the end of the third year.

Financial Viability

SPDT have collated the existing data on the costs of running the buildings, provided by DC Property, and have applied inflationary multipliers over the first 3 years. It has also assessed the level of staffing needed, from an initial low, in the first year, building up, as the complex becomes more popular, leading to full occupation in year three.

Charges to users will be based upon the costs of managing the buildings, including staffing, and an additional “sinking fund” for building up reserves and any future unbudgeted expenditure. This will provide users with cleaned, heated, accommodation, wi-fi and kitchen and reception facilities.

From research carried out, grants from local and national sources are likely to be available once the Transfer is completed in 12 to 18 months. From a feasibility study prepared by SPDT it is anticipated that the complex will be self-funding after 3 years, at which time thought can be given to extension and expansion to meet demand.

Initial funding requirements

The time of greatest risk for SPDT is the first 12 months. On taking occupation the Trust will be exposed to current utility and management costs, without any promise of income from users, until the new management is established.

The Trust has recently recruited part-time staff with the necessary experience to pick up the early management stages, working with volunteers. This keeps down the initial revenue requirements. As increasing occupation, by users, is established, additional staffing will be needed. However, this will be managed by close forecasting and budgeting to match revenue costs to income received and anticipated.

SPDT estimate that the initial shortfall that it will need to bear in the first years, will be £42,000 per annum. The timing of the length of this shortfall will depend upon the success of the Trust’s marketing of the accommodation to health and wellbeing users. Identification of potential users is already in progress, hence the interest that SPDT is establishing with Lewis-Manning. The use of DC Departments is still unknown at this stage.

SPDT is requesting, from STC, an initial funding requirement of **£21,000 pa for the first 3 years**. This request is made on the assumption that this amount can be matched from other sources, as yet unconfirmed.

Conclusion

The safeguarding and expansion of health and wellbeing services in Swanage is at the heart of the reason why SPDT was constituted. By protecting buildings for Community use, managing them efficiently, and not for profit, SPDT has established a model to provide cost effective space for health and wellbeing providers to attract them to stay and expand in Swanage. SPDT believe that this is a sustainable project which is here for the long term.

SPDT has been working closely with STC, to achieve this Asset Transfer, on behalf of the local Community. It wishes to continue to work collaboratively with the Council to ensure that the much needed, Chapel Lane Complex becomes an important resource, for protecting and improving the health and Wellbeing of the people of Swanage and the surrounding villages, generating significant Social Value for many years to come.