



Woodburn Community Hub – Update Report

Report by Ogo Onwuchekwa, Head of Service, Transformational Projects

1. Purpose of Report

To update Council on the Woodburn Community Hub project.

2. Background

- 2.1** Following the decision to close the Dalkeith Community Centre (DCC) building and subsequent concerns raised by the Woodburn community regarding the lack of community facilities in the area, Council agreed to work with the Dalkeith Miners Welfare Club (DMWC), an organisation run by members of the community and which already provided facilities to community groups, to provide enhanced facilities to cater for the groups displaced from the DCC. On 22 June 2011 Council decided that the concept of a community hub in the Woodburn area, which has subsequently been designated a Council priority area in terms of addressing the outcomes gap, should be explored in liaison with the DMWC. It was envisaged that this could be achieved by extending the physical capacity of the club building, supporting the DMWC to attract external funding, providing the funding for one year for a development worker and providing officer time and expertise to ensure that an inclusive and financially viable community hub was fully established in the area.
- 2.2** Weekly meetings were held with representatives of the Miners Club, council officers and local councillors. A development worker was recruited and a project officer from within the Council was appointed. The design for the new Hub was agreed (as a standalone building on the DMWC premises) and approved by Council, planning permission was obtained and several consultations were undertaken with the local community. There had been some concern regarding the fact that the current Miners Club building was a licensed one, but it was acknowledged that this model did work well in other areas, including Midlothian's Loanhead Miners Club, and several groups already used the building. During the process of due diligence it transpired that although the Club owned the land on which the Hub was to be built, the umbrella body the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) had fiduciary rights over the asset and was required to consent in writing to the land being given over for the hub. Unfortunately this proved to be a very contentious issue and led to protracted legal proceedings between the two parties. Despite various interventions by officers, local councillors and the local Member of Parliament, the stalemate persisted until late 2013, when the Miners Club agreed to call a halt to the legal process.
- 2.3** The development worker did not develop a business plan or a bid document during her tenure as required due to the aforementioned legal proceedings and the Council had limited leverage to intervene as the Council's role, though influential, is and was always intended to be Enabler as opposed to Provider.

3. Recent Developments

- 3.1** During this unfortunate hiatus, and amid growing concerns about the continued lack of a hub, a number of locations in Woodburn were investigated as possible alternative sites taking into account a number of factors including size, accessibility and ownership. Two potential locations were identified as worthy of further consideration – the old Dalkeith High School site and Cowden Park – and further investigations were undertaken to assess their feasibility. The resulting options appraisal report for these sites was discussed with the local councillors along with the risks, the major ones being the risk that the Council could not assume the additional budget pressures of building, maintaining and running the facility and that due to the lack of a viable alternative community group within Woodburn at the present time, a considerable amount of time could elapse before there arose an opportunity to transfer the asset (i.e. the building and / or building management). The councillors unanimously decided the most cost effective and viable option would be to pursue the collaboration with the Miners Club, which would involve drawing down funds from investment sources such as the Big Lottery Fund.
- 3.2** In March this year the Council engaged Community Enterprise, a social enterprise organisation with extensive experience in supporting and working with community groups to develop community facilities and obtain funding, to work with the Miners Club, supported by the Council to develop the business plan, write up and submit funding applications and undertake the necessary supporting activities required to bring the project to fruition. Their remit spans a requirement to build community capacity and build on work previously undertaken, but with a fresh approach bearing in mind community and societal requirements and expectations would have evolved over time.

4. Current Position

- 4.1** A survey exercise spanning a couple of months took place mid-year to find out what the community felt it needed. The survey was all-encompassing, aimed at individuals and families, young and old, residents and businesses. The first public meeting (post-hiatus) has taken place, hosted by the Miners Club, supported by the Council and facilitated and moderated by Community Enterprise. A number of issues arose from the meeting and these are being progressed. Further public meetings and meetings with individual groups are also planned. Work is ongoing on a number of fronts including analysing survey responses and incorporating the results into the proposals, revisiting the design of the facility including contents, developing the business plan and investigating sources of external funding. One application for the funding of development work has already been submitted and discussions are ongoing with a variety of potential funding sources. Work is ongoing within the community to encourage involvement in the project and ensure residents and businesses are kept informed and that the broad span of support continues. It is envisaged that the main funding bid(s) will be submitted towards the end of this year. The process usually comprises of two stages, which can span over 12 to 18 months before funds are released if successful.
- 4.2** The Council and Community Enterprise are both liaising with CISWO as the project develops. CISWO have given assurances that they are committed to supporting the development of the Hub and have pointed to their considerable track record in this regard across the UK. The Council's Legal Services have been involved in the development of the Hub and will continue to do so, liaising with solicitors representing CISWO and the Miners Club and seeking outside specialist input as and when necessary to ensure the interests of the Council are safeguarded at all times.

5. Report implications

5.1. Resource

- a) The cost of funding the development work undertaken by Community Enterprise is intended to be met from external funding sources and supplemented if necessary by the local councillors' environmental funds.

5.2. Risk

This is an update report and there are no risks associated with the contents or intent of the report as it is primarily retrospective. However, the risks associated with the project as a whole are as detailed in previous reports and include:

- a) **Failure to secure adequate funding for the project.** The project relies practically exclusively on the ability to obtain external funding as it is unlikely that the Council will be able to fund the Build. Engaging an organisation with Community Enterprise's track record mitigates this risk but given the strong competition for limited funds, does not eliminate it.
- b) **Failure to secure consent to build on the Miners Club premises.** The project obtained planning permission during its first phase and so there is a reasonable expectation that it will do so again. We will continue to liaise with the Council's Planning Dept to ensure proposals comply with statutory and other requirements. We are also working closely with CISWO to ensure that they have all the information they need to consent to the Build as they have done in numerous other partnerships involving miners clubs and local authorities.
- c) **Miners Club failing to proceed with the project.** This would cause a significant delay to the project as we have not been able to identify a viable alternative community group within Woodburn at the present time that could take the project forward. The project includes not only the building of the facility but extends to the future running, maintenance, promotion and development of it. Working with the Club and providing support and expertise both directly and indirectly via Community Enterprise provides ongoing mitigation to this risk. The local councillors are also actively and proactively involved in ensuring that things go as smoothly as possible and that potential difficulties or conflicts are resolved as soon as possible.

5.3. Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

5.4. Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The proposal is in accordance with Midlothian Council's corporate objective "to provide suitable infrastructure for the efficient and effective delivery of services to meet the full range of community needs".

Seeking to do it in partnership instead of completely funding the project unilaterally provides best value to the Council by enabling it to achieve its objective in a very cost-effective way, and supports best practice of empowering communities to achieve community objectives.

5.5. Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

There has been extensive engagement via surveys and meetings and this will continue. Discussions also continue to take place with the Miners Club, other stakeholders, officers, councillors and members of the community.

The project is a good example of co-production i.e. "the public sector (the Council) and citizens (led by the Miners Club) making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes and improved efficiency" (Governance International).

5.6. Ensuring Equalities

As referred to in section 5.5 above, community engagement has been and will continue to be aimed at all sections of the community. This is a key requirement for most if not all of the funding streams we are pursuing and inclusivity and equality are also principles actively promoted by the Miners Club. The actual facility will be DDA compliant and access will be available to all sections of the community.

5.7. Supporting Sustainable Development

The project has provided the opportunity for the Council to work in partnership with the Miners Club to provide a modern and much needed community hub for Woodburn and the wider Dalkeith area, thus promoting a vibrant and sustainable community environment.

6. Recommendations

Council is asked to note the contents of the report.

6 August 2014

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Declaration Box

Instructions: This box must be completed by the author of the report. The box will be copied and saved by the Council Secretariat who will delete it from the report prior to photocopying the agenda.

Title of Report: Woodburn Community Hub – Update Report

Meeting Presented to: Council

Author of Report: Ogo Onwuchekwa

I confirm that I have undertaken the following actions before submitting this report to the Council Secretariat (Check boxes to confirm):-

- X All resource implications have been addressed. Any financial and HR implications have been approved by the Head of Finance and Human Resources.***
- X All risk implications have been addressed.***
- X All other report implications have been addressed.***
- X My Director has endorsed the report for submission to the Council Secretariat.***

For Cabinet reports, please advise the Council Secretariat if the report has an education interest. This will allow the report to be located on the Cabinet agenda among the items in which the Religious Representatives are entitled to participate.

Likewise, please advise the Council Secretariat if any report for Midlothian Council has an education interest. The Religious Representatives are currently entitled to attend meetings of the Council in a non-voting observer capacity, but with the right to speak (but not vote) on any education matter under consideration, subject always to observing the authority of the Chair.