

**Proposal** Fordcombe Village Community Hall

**Applicant** Fordcombe Hall Trust

**Ward** Penshurst & Fordcombe

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the **£185,000** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “New Village Hall/Sports Pavilion Project” be approved for the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- The CIL contribution will be match funded from other sources.
- There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.

### Introduction

- 1 Fordcombe Village Hall falls within the Parish of Penshurst. It is located to the south of the District. The Parish is one of 31 that are located within the Sevenoaks District. It shares its border with Leigh and Chiddingstone parishes. It also shares a border to the south with Tunbridge Wells Borough.
- 2 Officers received the application for CIL funding on 29.10.2018.

### Description of Proposal

- 3 The project is to rebuild the existing village hall and to provide additional sports facilities as part of the project. The existing hall is 98 years old and in need of repair. The applicant has stated as part of their submission, that the use of the hall by village groups and individuals has dwindled due to dire facilities and poor access for the less mobile/disabled.
- 4 Due to the amount of work that needs to be done, the Village Hall Action Group have stated that the amount of refurbishment required would be more costly than a new hall and have therefore made the decision to demolish and build a new village hall and sports pavilion. They need to provide ‘a fit for purpose’ community and sports facility as there is no other community facility in the village.

- 5 As part of their bid, the applicant submitted details of the planning application submitted to Sevenoaks District Council (SE/18/01943). This sought consent for the demolition of the existing village hall and sports pavilion and the construction of a replacement village hall and sports pavilion with disabled parking and ramp. It was approved on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

### **Funding**

- 6 The applicant, the New Village Hall Action Group (NVHAG), have stated that the project to replace the existing village hall, allowing 5% contingency is £592,588. They have also sought funding from a variety of sources including from Kent County Council Village Hall scheme, from the Parish Council, fundraising events, Sport England, Lottery fund and also from other small community groups.
- 7 To meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, the Action Group has applied to the Board for £185,000 of CIL funding.

### **Representations and Support**

- 8 The application submitted indicates that whilst the Action Group is in serious dialogue with a pre-school day car provider, it is not working in a formal partnership with any other organisation to deliver the scheme. Therefore, it should be assumed that the Action Group is the sole organisation for the delivery of this scheme.
- 9 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:

- Cllr. Susan Coleman (SDC Ward Member for Peshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone)
- Peshurst Parish Council.

### **Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid**

#### *Principal Criteria met*

- The Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- The CIL contribution will be match funded from other sources.
- There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.

*Appraisal*

*Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community*

- 10 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed. This enhances the sustainability case as to whether the scheme should receive CIL funding.
- 11 In this case, from the information submitted, it is clear that there are social benefits to this scheme. A new community and sports hall will encourage and nurture social, physical, recreational and sporting activities for all from the young to the elderly and lesson social isolation for those without transport. It also provides the potential for a pre-school with wrap around care for the community. In addition, it also ensures the retention of a number of sports and community clubs which are likely to close without a suitable facility.
- 12 In regard to the economic impact, the scheme would have the potential to improve income for the Village Hall, with more users. Also by providing a pre-school with longer hours, it is considered the project will support mothers in returning to work, which again will provide a benefit locally. Whilst there is not a wider economic benefit, there is clearer some benefit to the hall committee itself and potentially the local community.
- 13 Whilst it is recognised that there will be environmental improvements to the proposal, due to more efficient methods of construction, reducing the need of residents to access facilities by car and better standards for heating and energy consumption and also an improvement to the external appearance, it is considered that there will not be a wider, specific environmental benefit to the proposal.
- 14 On balance however it is recognised that there is a strong local benefit that can be provided by this proposal.

*CIL contribution will be match funded from other sources.*

- 15 The Council has determined that the purpose of CIL funding is to be a “top-up”, to be used in meeting any funding deficiencies or gaps in order to deliver the proposed scheme. To reflect this one of the key criteria used to assess bids is to consider whether the CIL contribution will be matched by funding from other sources.
- 16 The applicant has indicated that there are a number of funding sources in place to support this project at including Kent County Council, the Parish

Council, Sports England, fund raising events, as well as other small charities and people from the village that will donate.

- 17 Members should note however that there is insufficient information to confirm that all the funding streams have been secured, as they are subject to separate bidding processes with independent organisations. However it is considered, on balance, that due to the commitment to the scheme, in that they have a strong project management of the scheme, that they have also met with the relevant bodies and have received positive feedback to indicate that their bids are realistic and that they will cover any shortfall by a loan for social enterprise, that the bid should be approved on this ground.

*There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.*

- 18 It is also important to consider as part of the assessment of this case as to whether the scheme can be easily delivered if CIL monies are given. It is clear from the evidence provided that the majority of the remaining funding is already in place. If all the grants are not provided, the applicant is prospered to bridge any shortfall with a loan for social enterprise, to ensure that there is sufficient funding for this project.
- 19 In addition to this, they have already sought and gained planning permission for the scheme and have also had engagement with the local community. It is considered from the information provided that they have fully considered the scope and timing of the works involved. From the information submitted it is clear that the Business and Development Plan has been going on for some years, with the full support of villagers.
- 20 I therefore consider from the information submitted that there is sufficient certainty that it can be delivered and be retained.

*Other considerations*

*Management of the project*

- 21 The applicant has confirmed that the new hall will be managed by the Fordcombe Village Hall Committee and Trustees as with the current hall. The Village Hall is a charitable Organisation, held in Trust for the use of the inhabitants of the village of Fordcombe and surrounding neighbourhood, which will ensure the long term use of the hall for the community.

**Conclusion**

- 22 The proposal to provide a new village hall/sports pavilion project, will help retain and improve a much needed community facility in Fordcombe and will

provide a strong economic, social and environmental benefit to the community.

- 23 The applicant has carried out a considerable amount of work to ensure that an appropriate facility is provided that meets the needs of the community. They have also sought to secure other funding sources for the project in addition to CIL and have also secured planning permission for the works. They have therefore provided sufficient information to show that the scheme is likely to be delivered.
- 24 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £185,000 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. Approving this bid would provide good value for the amount of CIL money applied for compared to the cost of the overall project.

<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix F1 - Original bidding proforma and supporting information
<b>Background Papers</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Simon Taylor (ext. 7134)

**Richard Morris**  
**Chief Planning Officer**