

Agenda Item 12

Housing Review Board

4 March 2010

EC/SJ



Millwey Rise, Axminster – including the community centre, football club and play area

Summary

In March 2008 the Housing Review Board tasked officers to set up a working party, including local residents and stakeholders, to look at the future options for the Millwey Community Centre (previously Weycroft Senior Citizens Centre). This work has been progressing and has developed into three distinct work streams – the future of the community centre, the proposals from the Millwey Rise Football Club and the moving of the play area. The Board received further information about the work on 4th September 2008, 30th April 2009 and 25th June 2009.

This report sets out the current position with each of these work streams and makes further recommendations.

Recommendation

- a) **To note** that the community working group do not feel able to take on the management of the existing hall or fund raise for a new hall.
- b) **To agree**, in light of the community centre's importance on the estate, to continue to fund the running of the centre for as long as possible and at least until major repair work is required to the fabric of the building.
- c) **To consider** whether to increase the rental charged for the community centre, and to include the Millwey Community Centre within the rent review for our other community centres.
- d) **To note** that the lease to the Millwey Rise Football Club is likely to be extended.
- e) **To note** that a Play Builder grant has been awarded for the proposed new play area at Millwey Rise.
- f) **To agree** that the team leading on moving the play area has the authority to work with the Play Builder grant project team from Devon County Council, with delegated authority given to the Head of Housing and Social inclusion to enter into any necessary contractual arrangements.
- g) **To agree** to include the land currently occupied by the play area within the lease to the Football Club once the new play area has been installed.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To keep the Community Centre open and accessible for the community for the foreseeable future, help facilitate the plans of the Football Club, and enable the provision of a new play area at Millwey Rise.

b) Alternative Options

Not to agree the recommendations and close the community centre.

c) Risk Considerations

Loss of goodwill among the local community at Millwey Rise, loss of funding to provide a new play area.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

These are included in the report.

e) Date for Review of Decision

If the Board agree to continue to fund the running of the community centre this should be reviewed annually.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 The working party has met regularly since early 2008. It is made up of representatives from:

- user groups of the centre including brownies, mother and toddler, Axe Valley Life
- local residents from the Millwey Estate, including representatives from the Millwey Rise Football Club.
- local town, district and county councillors.

These are all volunteers who have put in considerable time and effort to look at the future options for the community centre and other pieces of work.

1.2 The working party was originally tasked with looking at the future of the Millwey Community Centre, but was then approached by the Millwey Rise Football Club as they felt that it would be useful to consider their expansion plans within the same piece of work.

1.3 To enable the Football Club to expand it is necessary to move the existing play area and relocate it elsewhere.

1.4 For many years residents have considered the existing site of the play area as unsuitable as it attracts undesirable activities and is not visible to passersby. Most residents, including those with no connection to the Football Club, are keen for the play area to be relocated elsewhere on the estate and the area behind the Spar shop on First Avenue has been identified as the most suitable site. See location plan in **annex 1**.

1.5 The working party, originally set up to look at the future options for the community centre, has therefore expanded its work to also look at the Football Club proposals and the possibility of moving the play area.

2 Current situation regarding the future of the community centre

2.1 The working party have carefully considered the future options for the community centre including:

- raising funding to build a new centre, either on the same site or on a different site within the estate;
- forming a local management group to take over the management of the centre.

2.2 Raising funding for a new building:

2.2.1 The group has researched and taken advice from many sources including EDDC officers, East Devon Volunteer Services, and other organisations running community centres for example Woodbury Village Hall.

2.2.2 The group have been informed that there is no Section 106 money, or other funding from district or county councils available to build a new community centre in this area. Raising sufficient funding for a new building would therefore require major commitment from local people.

2.2.3 Many years ago a group of local residents raised about £10,000 towards a new community centre. The working party are trying to secure this money for the future and have written to the two existing signatories. This is an insignificant amount compared to the costs of a new building, but it is important to secure its availability for the future in case the situation changes.

2.3 Forming a local management group to manage the centre

2.3.1 The working party has spent several meetings considering whether they are able to form a group which could take over the management of the centre from East Devon DC.

2.3.2 They have carefully considered individually whether they are able to commit time and effort to this project, and have taken advice from Cllr. Graham Godbeer who is involved with the management of Woodbury Village Hall and from Jill Loader of EDVSA.

2.3.3 They commented that 'the management of the hall would be a big venture for this small group of people, many of whom have several other commitments to their time'.

2.4 Conclusion

2.4.1 The group ask that the Housing Review Board is informed that the community working group do not feel able to take on the management of the hall or fund raise for a new hall.

2.4.2 They also ask that, when considering the future for the centre, the Housing Review Board take into account its importance as a community facility on the estate, which is one of the largest in the district but has very limited facilities.

2.4.3 The Board is therefore asked to keep the community centre open and agree to continue to fund its management and running costs for as long as possible and at least until major repair work is required to the fabric of the building.

2.4.4 The Board may wish to consider increasing the rent charged for hiring the centre which is currently lower than the rent for our other community centres. (The rental charges have not been increased since EDDC took back the management of the centre in November 2008.) The current charges for renting the community centre are £6 per session for regular users and £11 per session for one off hire.

A review of all hire charges for housing owned community centres is currently taking place and it is recommended that Millwey Community Centre is included within this.

3 Millwey Rise Football Club – expansion plans

3.1 The Football Club has plans to develop the provision of youth football and better club facilities in the future.

3.2 They approached the community working group to see if there was the possibility of any joint working.

3.3 There is as yet no master plan drawn up for their plans, but the short term goals are to improve the size and quality of the football and training pitches. To do this they need to:

- a) lease land to the south of their current site from the town council (agreed in principle).
- b) extend their lease of existing land from East Devon DC by a further 20 years (see 3.4 below).
- c) include the land on which the play area is currently located within the land leased from East Devon DC (see Section 4 below).

3.4 The Asset Management Forum has considered, and the Portfolio Holder – Communities has agreed to, the extension of the lease of the land for a further 20 years, with the proviso that the lease is renewed at a market rent, includes suitable break clauses at 10 and 15 years, and has clauses covering new and/or replacement buildings. The new lease to either run on from April 2012 or sooner if the Club surrender the existing lease. The football

club have initiated some early negotiations over the possibility of a move to an alternative site close by, and the extension of the lease will held over until these negotiations are concluded.

3.5 The Board is asked note this proposed extension to the lease, subject to the above.

4 Moving the play area

4.1 Local residents have been asking for the existing play area adjacent to the Football Club to be moved for many years. Moving of the play area will also help facilitate the Football Club's expansion plans.

4.2 The Housing Review Board meeting on 30 April 2009 asked officers to progress negotiations with the Planning Service regarding the relocation of the Play Area, and Planning has confirmed that *'provided EDDC or Axminster Town Council own or maintain the land and carry out and maintain the play area, then in our view planning permission is not required from the Local Planning Authority'*.

4.3 Officers have worked with the community working group to submit a bid to Devon County Council Play Builders for a grant towards the work and this has been successful. We should receive approximately £30,000 from Play Builders. The exact amount will be confirmed in March.

4.4 The Section 106 Monitoring Officer has managed to secure funding of £47,000 for this project from play and recreation money available in Axminster.

4.5 The funding will allow for a new play area to be located on the site behind the Spar Shop on First Avenue.

4.6 Further community consultation will now take place to draw up the tender document. The successful tenders will then be voted on by the community before the contract is awarded.

4.7 To meet the Play Builder grant requirements work will need to be completed by March 2011.

4.8 The existing play area will need to be decommissioned. Funding for this will need to be found within the budget for the Football Club's expansion plans (possibly from S106 money).

4.9 The Board are asked to note the progress of this part of the project and formally agree that the team leading on this work (the Housing Projects Officer, the Housing Community Development Worker (Youth), the Section 106 Monitoring Officer, and the Technical Assistant Streetscene) have the authority to work with the Play Builder grant project team from Devon County Council.

4.10 The Board are also asked to agree to include the land currently occupied by the play area within the lease to the Football Club once the new play area has been installed.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Board are therefore asked to:

- a) **To note** that the community working group do not feel able to take on the management of the existing hall or fund raise for a new hall.
- b) **To agree**, in light of the community centre's importance on the estate, to continue to fund the running of the centre for as long as possible and at least until major repair work is required to the fabric of the building.

- c) **To consider** whether to increase the rental charged for the community centre, and to include the Millwey Community Centre within the rent review for our other community centres.
- d) **To note** that the lease to the Millwey Rise Football Club is likely to be extended.
- e) **To note** that a Play Builder grant has been awarded for the proposed new play area at Millwey Rise.
- h) **To agree** that the team leading on moving the play area has the authority to work with the Play Builder grant project team from Devon County Council, with delegated authority given to the Head of Housing and Social inclusion to enter into any necessary contractual arrangements.
- f) **To agree** to include the land currently occupied by the play area within the lease to the Football Club once the new play area has been installed.

Legal Implications

There are no legal issues requiring comment on this report.

Financial Implications

The costs of the new play area will be met from the DCC Play Builder Grant and from S106 receipts. It is unclear where the costs of decommissioning the existing play area will come from (probably S106 money). The cost of running and maintaining the community centre will have to be met from the HRA although receipts from increased rental, if agreed, will offset this.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

Local community involvement as explained in the report.

Background Papers

Housing Review Board Papers present on 6th March 2008, 4th September 2008, 30th April 2009 and 25th June 2009.

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Housing Review Board
4 March 2010

Proposed new Play Area - Millwey Rise Axminster

