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| Subject: | Canterbury Community Football Hub |
| Head of Service: | Head of Culture & Communications |
| Decision Issues: | These matters are within the authority of the Executive |
| Decision type: | Non -key |
| Classification: | This report is open to the public |
| CCC Ward(s): | Canterbury Wards |
| Summary: | <p><i>This report presents the main findings from the consultant's report into the development of a Community Football Hub for Canterbury. The consultant has assessed potential sites, schedules of facilities and capital and operational costs. In addition to the findings from the consultant's study, this report also considers the planning implications of the options presented.</i></p> <p><i>The Executive will be asked to consider these planning implications when considering next steps. It is proposed that public and other stakeholder consultation will then take place on the consultant's report.</i></p> |
| To consider: | Members of the panel are asked to comment on the consultant's report and the planning options presented in this report |
| Next stage in process | This report will be considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 March. The Executive will then consider the options presented on 15 April |

1. Introduction

The development of a Community Football Hub for Canterbury is a critical priority within the council's current Corporate Plan. This commitment goes back to 2002, when the then Executive considered the next steps for the future development of the Kingsmead site, and it was ultimately resolved that the council would commit up to £1m to provide a new ground for Canterbury City FC. The Football Club's senior team was reformed in 2006 and has been working with the council on finding a new ground.

A subsequent study undertaken by PMP Consulting also identified a range of other potential facilities in addition to those required by Canterbury City FC, which could be delivered on the Hub, including commercial and community leisure facilities.

Further work was required on the site analysis, potential mix of facilities and financial implications of the project and Capita Symonds were appointed in April 2009 to undertake this work. Their report on site selection, facility mix and capital and operational costs has now been completed. The process has involved desk-top analysis, discussions with key

officers across the council and site visits. It is intended that the next stage in the process is to consult with the public and other stakeholders on the findings of the report before any formal decision is made regarding the site selection, facility mix and preferred options.

2. Capita Symonds Report - Summary Findings

The Capita Symonds report will be sent out separately to Members of the panel

The main findings from the study are: -

- Ridland's Farm has been identified as the preferred site out of the twenty-three that have been reviewed.
- Five potential development options have been identified, with the capital costs ranging from £1,361,685 to £4,484,924.
- Following a review of funding sources and options, when the cost of prudential borrowing is considered, the options in **Appendix A** show varying degrees of viability; ranging from a projected annual loss of approximately £14K for Option 1 to a projected surplus of £46K for Option 4.

3. Site Selection and Methodology

3.1 Site Selection

The site analysis has involved a thorough review of twenty-three potential sites; compiled from officer local knowledge, the Local Plan, sites assessed for employment land and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) submissions.

3.2 Initial Evaluation

Evaluation criteria to assess each site were established by Capita Symonds in consultation with officers. These were divided into an initial evaluation, followed by a more detailed scoring matrix. The two initial evaluation criteria were considered to be essential site requirements; if a site did not pass the initial evaluation, it was not taken forward for more detailed assessment.

- a) A minimum site capacity of approximately **eight hectares** in order to accommodate the full range of facilities necessary for the financial sustainability of the site identified in the feasibility study or to allow for further development of sports pitches or community facilities as required.
- b) Within **eight hundred metres** of the urban boundary. This ensures that it will be well placed to serve the primary catchment population of Canterbury within approximately a ten-minute walk as supported by PPG13.

3.3 Scoring of Short-listed Sites

The fifteen sites that passed the initial evaluation were subsequently scored and ranked against their ability to accommodate the development. All sites under consideration received a score between 1 (low) and 3 (high) for each of the assessment criterion; the site with the highest total was then deemed to be most suitable and therefore the preferred option.

3.4 Preferred site

The outcome of Capita Symonds own site appraisal supports the earlier recommendation, made by PMP, that Ridland’s Farm would be the preferred location for the development of a Community Football Hub in Canterbury. Nackington Road (Educational), Cockering Farm and Cockering Road have also been scored as equal second as alternative suitable locations.

| No. | Description | Score |
|-----|--|-------|
| 3 | Ridland’s Farm | 22 |
| 4 | Nackington Road (educational) | 19 |
| 7 | Cockering Road | 19 |
| 23 | Cockering Farm | 19 |
| 12 | Land Between Rough Common and Canterbury | 18 |
| 13 | Howe Barracks | 18 |
| 16 | Sturry Road Community Gardens | 18 |
| 18 | Little Barton Farm | 18 |
| 19 | Land Behind New Dover Road Park & Ride | 18 |
| 9 | University of Kent (southern slopes) | 17 |
| 14 | Land East of Spring Lane | 16 |
| 22 | Oaks Park 2 | 16 |
| 1 | Polo Farm | 15 |
| 11 | Land West of Harbledown | 15 |
| 8 | Alcroft Grange | 14 |

Table 1: Option Sites Ranking

Ridland’s Farm however retains the following significant benefits:

- It is unique in its proximity with three secondary schools, a number of special schools and the hospital. There are physical links with both the Simon Langton Boys School and Kent and Canterbury hospital; this connectivity offers scope for potential funding opportunities with health and educational partners. This link is important when seeking external grant funding from the likes of the Football Foundation and others.
- There is already an established cluster of sporting infrastructure with the Canterbury Bowling Club adjoining the site and the Canterbury Rugby Football Club and the Kent County Cricket Ground also nearby. The other sites do not offer such links.
- It is the only site under consideration that is covered by policy C25 of the Local Plan which states that Land identified at Greenhill, Ridland’s Farm, Canterbury and at Folly Farm, Canterbury will be protected from development to enable its future use as public playing fields. This designation supports the strategic planning need for this type of sports and recreational facility on the Ridland’s Farm site.
- The site meets the statement made in PPG17 that the countryside around towns and cities provides a valuable resource for the provision of sport and recreation where there is an absence of land in urban areas to meet provision. Also by its accessibility by alternative modes of transport to the car as it is located on the no. 25 bus routes to the hospital and within easy walking and cycling distance.
- Unlike the alternative sites under consideration, Ridland’s Farm is in Council ownership; this means there would be no land acquisition costs incurred. The additional cost of land acquisition at other locations will have a negative impact on the viability of the hub.

3.5 Land Ownership

A willing landowner is also crucial to the feasibility and deliverability of the football hub project. The current statuses of the top four sites are:

- **Ridland's Farm** – The site is held in council ownership and supportive of developing it as a football hub. The Local Plan also protects it from development to enable its future use as public playing fields.
- **Nackington Road (Educational)** – The site was until recently in the ownership of a partner who was open to the future development of the site. The land has now been sold to a private developer, where it is understood there may be a preference towards the provision of educational, rather the leisure facilities.
- **Cockering Farm** – The landowner is supportive of developing the site in some form. It already has outline planning permission as a golf course as well as being identified as a potential option for a new Park and Ride terminal and has been included in recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment submissions.
- **Cockering Road** – The site is open farmland. Two agencies have submitted SHLAA application for the site for residential development.

Sites assessed at Sturry Road Community Gardens and Rough Common are also held in Council ownership, however both are currently unavailable for development as they are on long-term leases.

4. Financial Overview

The outcome of the work completed to date concludes with Ridland's Farm as the preferred option. Five potential development options have been identified, deliverable by two approaches dependant on the option taken.

4.1 Development Options

Capita Symonds have developed five potential development options:

- 1a. Canterbury FC Facilities (Kent League)
- 1b. Canterbury FC Facilities (Ryman League)
2. Canterbury FC Facilities and artificial pitch
3. Canterbury FC Facilities, artificial pitch and health and fitness facilities
4. Canterbury FC Facilities, STP, health and fitness, commercial five-a-Side

Appendix 1 – shows the elemental cost summary for each option. This details the funding currently available, the capital shortfall, the projected revenue surplus or deficit including lifecycle costs and the level of prudential borrowing that would be required.

The Council currently has £500,000 allocated in its 2011 capital programme. In addition the S106 agreement for Kingsmead contains a commitment for the developer to pay up to £473,500 prior to 70% of the stock being occupied.

The schedule of facilities that are included in each of the options and the breakdown of the individual costs are contained within the Capita Symonds report. These are based on multiplying the area by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) benchmark data for the construction of similar sports facilities. The capital cost for each option excludes the community facilities, which would come as an additional expense.

The figures provided are benchmarked information, underpinned by reasonable assumptions at this stage.

5. Preferred Facility Mix

From the financial analysis Capita Symonds are recommending Option 4 as the preferred option as it provides the greatest range of facilities for the benefit of the wider community and it is potentially the most financially sustainable option when the borrowing requirements are taken into account.

However, the report also indicates that Options 2 and 3 are deliverable. In light of the consultation undertaken in 2008 where some concern was expressed by local residents regarding the scale of the then proposed development, it is recommended that Option 2 is pursued as the preferred option. The option is affordable, with a small surplus of revenue over the annuity required. This option fits well with existing planning policy, meets the requirements of Canterbury City FC and means that a significant part of the site could be developed for informal community leisure provision for local residents such as children's play areas, walking and cycling areas, informal public open space. It also provides greater scope for external funding from the Football Foundation than Options 1 and 1a. This option also further supports the council in delivering its Open Space Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy, which seeks to rationalise sports pitch provision across the district.

This option rules out the development of the eight 5-a-side pitches and gym as previously proposed. These elements caused considerable concern during the previous consultation particularly in relation to the impact on local traffic. Option 2 will significantly reduce the volume of traffic to the site compared to options 3 and 4. Access would still be required through Canterbury Bowls Club.

6. Consultation planned or undertaken

Consultation took place in 2008 on the proposed development of a Community Football Hub in Canterbury. Views were sought on the preferred site and potential range of facilities.

Further consultation is planned in advance of any final decision on the preferred site and development option.

7. Planning Implications

There are two possible approaches to taking forward this project at Ridland's Farm within the current planning framework:

- (1) As a planning application to be considered in relation to the current Canterbury District Local Plan; or
- (2) As a new proposal to be considered through the Local Development Framework (LDF) process.

The Local Plan (Policy C25) identifies Ridland's Farm as an area to "*be protected from development to enable its future use as public playing fields*". In terms of the facilities options, this means that there is a good case for saying that Option 2, in particular, has a good "fit" with Policy C25, although some elements would not be fully "public" in terms of direct accessibility i.e. the main pitch for use by Canterbury City FC. However, it might be that such a proposal would still be identified as a "departure" from the Local Plan, and need to be referred to the Secretary of State. It is possible that this could be the first phase of a community-based scheme, with other elements being tested through the LDF process.

Clearly, if other elements are added to the scheme, including fitness and other facilities (options 3 and 4 in particular), there is an increasing built character to the proposals, and

some of these elements will be less “public”. Although it is possible to build a business case for a “departure” scheme, based on the public facilities that would be provided, it is likely that any of these options would be a “departure” and would need to be referred to the Secretary of State.

With each added built or non-public element, the “fit” with the Local Plan becomes less clear. In this case, the likelihood of gaining planning consent diminishes, although the planning case would be assisted by Council confidence about the need for the development and the public benefit. For a scheme that is more developed in character it might be more appropriate to pursue the proposal as a whole through the LDF process, but this would take substantially more time (due to development master-planning and development agreements) and have serious implications for Canterbury City FC (see below).

It should be noted that the Local Development Framework process might also

- (1) Identify some other sites not currently being considered as possible options; or
- (2) Demonstrate that one of the options already considered might be more suitable within the context of a wider area, which is identified as suitable for development through the process.
- (3) An alternative use for the Ridland’s Farm site.

Delivering the project through the LDF process (with its broad consideration of spatial strategy and associated statutory process for the allocation of sites) will ultimately provide a clearer framework for future planning decisions. The LDF process, however, is lengthy, with adoption in 2012 at the earliest. Should the provision of a community football hub become a component of a wider development area identified through the LDF process (point 2 above), then there could be further delays associated with any master-planning / development agreements and development phasing.

8. Canterbury City FC Implications

Pursuing the Local Development Framework route will potentially delay the delivery of a new ground for the club by a number of years. This will have a number of implications for the club and these are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Whilst the club’s first team is able to ground share, not being in a position to identify a permanent home for the club will prevent them from being promoted to the Kent County Football League. This will undermine the progress the first team has made over the last two seasons and require the club to go into ‘football hibernation’ for a number of years. This option would ensure that a semblance of a club survived to work on a ground project with the council at a later date. That club would be very different from the vibrant, ambitious structure that exists today.

The Kent County FA has identified this project as a key priority hence the potential capital contribution of £750,000 towards the project. The Kent FA and the Football Foundation will only keep this allocation until then end of 2010. Any delay through the LDF will rule out this funding being available for this project.

9. Relevant council policy

The development of a Community Football Hub is a critical priority within the current Corporate Plan.

10. Options available with reasons for suitability

These are set out in the report. At this stage the Executive will be asked to agree the preferred planning route for the project and to follow this decision with public and other stakeholder consultation.

11. Reasons for supporting option recommended, with risk assessment

The Capita Symonds report supports the previous PMP Consulting study and Executive report in identifying Ridland's Farm as the potentially preferred site for the Community Football Hub.

Of the 5 facility mix options, on balance, Officers believe Option 2 is preferred as it provides a home to Canterbury City FC, a range of publicly available pitches, an artificial pitch available for training, community use and limited 5-a-side provision and scope for further community facilities such as children's play areas where there is an identified need. Children's play provision was an issue raised by South Canterbury residents during the last consultation process

However, before proceeding further with the project, the Executive will be asked to consider whether to proceed with the project through the Local Plan or the Local Development Framework. As set out in the report, there are risks either way from a planning perspective, a timing perspective (with implications for the club) and from a financial perspective.

In both cases (LDF or Local Plan), the Capita Symonds report will then be subject to consultation with the public and other stakeholders. The nature of this consultation will be dependent upon the planning route but will be designed to ensure the widest possible engagement as possible. This consultation will then inform any final decision on site and facility mix.

12. Implications

- (a) Financial Implications – these are contained within the report and in Appendix 1
- (b) Legal and planning implications- these are contained within the report

Other implications - none

13. Conclusions

The development of a Community Football Hub is a critical priority within the council's current Corporate Plan. The preferred option is one that delivers a home for Canterbury City FC along with the potential for wider benefits for local residents and clubs. This option is significantly scaled down from the one previously subject to public consultation but is potentially sustainable from a financial point of view.

Presuming option 2 is the preferred facility mix option, the key issue for consideration before further consultation is whether to proceed through a planning application considered in relation to the Local Plan or to leave the potential development of the Community Football Hub for consideration as part of the Local Development Framework.

14. Background Papers

List of background papers (excluding published works) for this report:

- Capita Symonds: Development of a Community Football Hub – Site Options Appraisal Report, Feb 2010

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APPENDIX 1 – Elemental Cost Summary

| Ref | Funding Source | Option 1 Estimated Cost | Option 1a Estimated Cost | Option 2 Estimated Cost | Option 3 Estimated Cost | Option 4 Estimated Cost |
|-----|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| A | | £1,374,498 | £1,396,674 | £2,306,425 | £3,838,816 | £4,496,751 |
| | Less:- | | | | | |
| | Council Capital | £500,000 | £500,000 | £500,000 | £500,000 | £500,000 |
| | Section 106 Funding | £472,000 | £472,000 | £472,000 | £472,000 | £472,000 |
| | Football Foundation Grant | £0 | £0 | £750,000 | £750,000 | £750,000 |
| | Football Foundation Grant/Ground Improvement | £20,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 | £20,000 |
| | Rugby Football Union Capital Funding | | | £50,000 | £50,000 | £50,000 |
| B | Total Funding | £992,000 | £992,000 | £1,792,000 | £1,792,000 | £1,792,000 |
| C | Capital shortfall/surplus (B-A) | -£382,498 | -£404,674 | -£514,425 | -£2,046,816 | -£2,704,751 |
| D | Revenue Surplus / Deficit - Including Lifecycle Costs | £10,700 | £10,700 | £35,600 | £172,600 | £227,800 |

| | Option 1 | Option 1a | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------|
| Amount of borrowing required | £382,499 | £404,675 | £514,426 | £2,046,817 | £2,704,752 |
| Length of loan (yrs) | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Interest rate | 4.5% | 4.5% | 4.5% | 4.5% | 4.5% |
| Annuity required | £25,800 | £27,290 | £34,690 | £138,040 | £182,410 |
| Revenue surplus | £10,700 | £10,700 | £35,600 | £172,600 | £227,800 |
| Revenue surplus minus annuity required | -£15,100 | -£16,590 | £910 | £34,560 | £45,390 |

APPENDIX 2 - Impact to CCFC on consequences of 'LDF Route' decision

Background

In the two playing seasons since re-forming the club's First Team has won successive promotions and now plays in the Kent County League Premier Division, the most senior league open to teams playing in 'open grounds'. This league falls under the purview of the Kent County Football Association and is classified as Step 7/6.

The next possible promotion for the team would be to the Kent Football League which is administered by the Football Association and classified as Step 5. This is classed as Senior Football and gives clubs access to national competitions such as the FA Cup and FA Trophy. There are two requirements for achieving Step 5 Status:

1. Winning promotion from Step 7/6 (in this case the Kent County Football League). This can be achieved by finishing in the top three in the division if neither of the teams above can satisfy the ground status criteria identified below.
2. Step 5 Ground Grading Criteria – including fenced off playing area, flood lighting, covered seating for 100 persons etc.

Teams that are in consideration to finish in the top three of the division are eligible to apply for promotion by December 31 (half way through the playing season). This is to allow the Football Association time to carry out ground inspections to ensure suitability.

The Football Association do allow clubs to ground-share for the purpose of applying for promotion. In this case the ground being considered for sharing must be currently of the required standard for the grade being applied. **However consideration for an application based on ground-share will only be considered where a permanent facility of the desired standard is planned or under way.**

The Club's Current Proposal

In the light of progress on the pitch the club have already made their application for promotion to the Kent Football League. Football-wise there is every chance that the team will finish in the top three and even if promotion were missed this year the application gives a three-year period for it to be achieved.

To satisfy the Ground Grading issue the club have an outline agreement to ground-share with a local Kent League club. This agreement would run for three years which, on the understanding that the club would move into a permanent home within Canterbury within that time, would satisfy the Football Association's criteria.

The ground-share initiative is a costly commitment for the club (at least £5K per annum) but the Directors believed that only by showing such ambition to progress the club could the momentum generated over the previous three years be sustained. Whilst there is an element of a gamble about the ground-share it does give the club two additional opportunities to achieve promotion should it be unsuccessful this season.

In preparation for any prospective promotion, the team manager has started to assemble a playing staff that will be good enough to participate within senior football.

In most cases this consists of players who have progressed through junior and youth football in the district.

The club have compiled a comprehensive Business Plan that demonstrates that the move is viable and would not cut across any of the Community Football work that the club does. It is hoped that the club would be in a position to increase its community commitment were it to be elevated to Senior Status.

Consequences of Delay

1. The application for promotion to the Kent League (Step 5) would have to be withdrawn as the club would not be in a credible position to demonstrate any likelihood of moving into a permanent home within three years. Irrespective of playing performance the club would therefore have to remain (at best) in the Kent County Premier Division.
2. Playing wise this would require the club to change its attitude and ambition towards promotion. Players looking to progress into Step 5 and beyond would leave the club as would the present team management. The club may even need to consider moving back down the football pyramid and playing in a local league until the proposed new facility was a realistic prospect.
3. The ground-share proposal could still go ahead although the cost implications would be serious for the club as attendances for games in the County League would be far lower than at Step 5 level. As a result the club might have to reduce its number of teams or even curtail some of its community initiatives. It is therefore highly unlikely that the club would proceed with the ground-share option in the event of a delay and would remain at Hersden Recreation Ground.
4. Whilst the main implications of 'delay' involve the First Team it is important to recognise that the club (as with all clubs) is most widely identified with the success (or otherwise) of its First XI. The momentum the club has generated over the past three seasons has largely emanated from the success enjoyed by the senior side. Any stalling in this progress will have a detrimental effect on the wider club.
5. The club's financial position would be severely undermined as retaining current sponsors and recruiting new ones would be virtually impossible during this period

Although there has not yet been an opportunity to discuss these ramifications at Board level, it is envisaged that a decision to opt for the LDF route would require the Directors to put the club into 'football hibernation' for a number of years. This option would ensure that a semblance of a Club survived to work on a ground project with the City Council at a later date. That club would be very different from the vibrant, ambitious structure that exists today.

Further details are available at www.canterbury.gov.uk/footballhub