

APPENDIX TO REPORT 9.1 (COUNCIL PROPERTY STRATEGY)

REPORT TO PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL - 2nd October 2018

AGENDA ITEM 8.2.1 Implications of decision on Parish Council's Outline Planning Application

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members are aware that Outline planning permission was refused on 15th August 2018 for the proposed replacement village hall on the IROS. The reason for refusal was as follows:

The development would result in the loss of Open Space in a sustainable area in close proximity to residential properties. It has not been demonstrated that this land is surplus to requirements, and the loss resulting from the proposed development would not be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. No benefits are identified which would outweigh the loss of this Open Space. As such the proposal would fail to comply with paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018), policies SC2, SC3 and SE6 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2010 – 2030), and policy RT1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (2004).

- 1.2 No objection was raised by CEC on the basis of detailed issues such as the potential appearance of the proposed building, the obstruction of residents' views, car parking or access issues, or effect on nature conservation, etc. The Officer's report was explicit on this.
- 1.3 The discussion at Northern Planning Committee focussed on the balance between the benefits of the proposal, as described in the Parish Council's planning application (the potential for generation of new community activities, greater sustainability of a new purpose-built building effectively to replace two inefficient buildings, in a location better related to the village, etc) and the extent of the objections received from the local community. There was reference to the apparent 'disconnect' between the Parish Council and the local community. Reference was made in the officer report to the submission of 73 letters of objection to the scheme. There was nothing in the supporting documents to the application to counter the impression that the project was opposed by the village community more or less as a whole.
- 1.4 A subsequent analysis of 67 of the 73 objections that could be accessed on CEC's website shows that letters were received by CEC from 34 households within the parish and a further 7 from addresses outside the parish.

2. Implications of the decision

- 2.1 The choices available to the Parish Council in response to that decision are essentially three:
- Not to pursue planning any further and to concentrate on an option based around retention of the existing village hall; or
 - Submit an appeal against the refusal, which would be determined by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State; such an appeal could be pursued totally in writing, by

means of an 'informal hearing' in front of the Inspector, or by a formal public inquiry. Such an appeal needs to be submitted within 6 months of the date of the refusal; or

- Resubmit the proposal to CEC, perhaps providing additional information and/or amending the proposal to try to deal with the issues raised. Such an application can be submitted within 12 months of the date of refusal, without the need to submit a further planning application fee.

2.2 Which of these routes is to be followed will have to be decided at some point by this Council.

3. Discussion

3.1 Members will recall that:

- At your meeting on 13th February 2018 you decided that the concept of replacing the existing village hall on the IROS site was your preferred option for achieving the objectives alluded to in the report to that meeting.
- The pursuit of the Outline planning application did not mean that the Council had decided to replace the current village hall on the IROS site; rather it was seen as a fundamental first step in trying to decide whether such a solution was a realistic option.
- The Outline planning application incorporated only an indicative idea of the form a replacement village hall might take – no decision has yet been made on the size or detailed form of any such proposal; however, members felt that some idea of the concept needed to be demonstrated to the District Council.

3.2 Members' perception may be that these facts were not properly understood by many of the persons who submitted objections to the outline proposal.

3.3 However, in the light of the planning decision and continuing the process that the Parish Council has been pursuing for some time – to seek the optimum means of providing the parish with built asset(s) that will best secure and positively enhance the potential for community involvement and activities in the village, whilst enhancing those asset(s) in terms of for instance energy efficiency, operational economy and sustainability – it now seems appropriate to consider the following actions:

- To carry out a more rigorous investigation of the costs of repairing, refurbishing and enhancing the current village hall and Turton Pavilion, such that they will provide an enhanced basis for the development of community activities into the future. This means more than simply repairing the buildings and making do – it should look toward creating buildings that will secure the community objectives stated above – the Parish Council might consider itself failing in its duties if it did not pursue such an ideal.
- Tackling the issue of community engagement further, by seeking further ways to contact and receive up to date feedback from the whole community of the parish in relation to the Parish Council's aspirations.

3.4 The first of these two actions will involve some financial expenditure if useful data are to be obtained. However, such information would be a pre-requisite whether your Council decides either to progress a refurbishment/renovation option, or to pursue further the option of replacing the two buildings with one.

3.5 The second may require some small-scale expenditure in terms of purchasing appropriate stationery, etc.

3.6 Dealing with those two aspects should enable the Council to refine further the scope and purposes of the project, and to reach a further conclusion as to the best way forward.

4. Recommendation

4.1 That members consider the issues raised and decide how to proceed.

J Steel - Clerk