

FULL COUNCIL – 15 MARCH 2021**COMMUNITY CAFÉ TASK & FINISH GROUP – INTERIM FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS****1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To present interim findings and recommendations of the Task & Finish Group which includes: -
- Agreement in principle that a not-for-profit community café be placed on the Shorts Road site, currently occupied by the derelict scout hut.
 - That the café be run by The Fountain Café Community Interest Company.
 - That the project be phased, starting with the erection of the Café and then ancillary community provision such as creative spaces meeting rooms, a men's shed workshop, disabled parking, community fridge and hard & soft landscaping.
 - That a community consultation exercise be undertaken seeking residents' views on these proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Establishing a community café as a community hub in the village has been a long-term aspiration of Fair Oak & Horton Heath Parish Council (FOPC) & the Fountain Café (FC) to deliver a community facility for the people of Fair Oak & Horton Heath. Residents of the parish have in recent community surveys expressed the desire/wish to have an affordable, community friendly café in the village. To ascertain how this could be achieved, in 2019 the Parish Council established a Task & Finish Group consisting of the Clerk, Administrative Officer, Cllrs Forfar & Higby and Mr & Mrs Nicholson & Mr Stupple.
- 2.2 The Task & Finish Group presented initial findings to the Full Council in February 2020. At this meeting, members indicated their support for the establishment of a café and asked the Clerk (and the Group) to work up more detailed proposals including the suggestion that the café be sited on the Shorts Road site, occupied by the Scout Hut.
- 2.3 Since that meeting, the Task & Finish Group have met six times in total. And have developed a proposal and way forward for the Council to consider. Alongside this, negotiations between the Scouts and the Council have progressed to a point where Solicitors have been instructed to oversee the formal surrender of the lease on the land, with the aim to demolish the hut as soon as the legal process has completed.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 At the forefront of these proposals is the Council's commitment to provide a Café that would be operated by the Fountain Café as an established not-for-profit, parish charity. It would be an important and valuable community hub for the Village being placed in the New Century Park, adjacent to the new play area. In accordance with the Parish Council's green credentials, the Group also want to ensure that the new building is designed to enable carbon neutral operation.
- 3.2 The Group would like to expand the offer onsite beyond that of a café, to that of a social enterprise scheme, offering valuable employment to young people with

additional learning needs. As well as a phased approach, with other facilities on site such as a Men's shed, creative meeting room space, community planting etc.

- 3.3 Having assessed the site, a Group determined the requirements of the building – the size and structure, bearing in mind any covenants as part of the Scout negotiations. It is suggested that the proposed Community café will be slightly smaller than the existing Scout Hut, with a footprint roughly 70% of the existing building. It will have a toilet with baby changing facilities and disabled access, which users of the Park would be able to access when the Café is open. The Café would also have a serving hatch for take-away coffees, direct access from the park, bi-fold doors overlooking the existing Play Area, kitchen, serving and seating.
- 3.4 Having established the location, site specifications, access and other (sustainable) aspirations for the building, the Fountain Café approached a local architect (who has given his time for free) to produce initial designs, the results of which are set out in appendix 1.
- 3.5 Whilst the designs are still in their infancy, the Group's preferred design would be a timber clad construction, with a modern twist, whilst remaining sympathetic with the existing park surroundings. It is anticipated that the new building would fit in the same position as the existing building which will be demolished to make way for this innovative facility. Bi-fold doors would be used to open-up the space and connect the building to the play area. Along with the other buildings on the site, this would create a courtyard area that can be landscaped to create an additional outdoor space for users of the hub buildings.
- 3.6 The Group proposes that the project be undertaken in phases, namely: -

Phase 1 – demolish the scout hut, undertaken groundworks, erect timber clad café building, boundary landscaping. Improved access to/from the park and new gated access to the play area.

Phase 2 – meeting rooms & creative space

Phase 3 – additional small outbuilding

4. ASPIRATION/GOAL

- 4.1 A not-for-profit community cafe where people can buy drinks and food providing a much-needed social hub for the village, increasing social engagement between different age groups and social groupings within the village and reducing social isolation.
- 4.2 In time, it is hoped that the café will provide a platform from which the Council and Fountain Cafe can launch community outreach services.
- 4.3 The café will provide employment for individuals with additional learning needs. These paid roles will be supported by an (existing) army of volunteers who will carry out a wide range of duties. As such, the café will offer training opportunities and work experience for members of the local community which could help them enter paid employment afterwards (retail and customer service skills, communication and social skills, experience of a friendly, supportive and hard-working environment, teamwork skills and confidence and support in seeking work.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Should the Council support the proposals above, it is suggested that a community consultation exercise be undertaken, starting with the Shorts Road residents,

outlining the aspirations of this scheme. The Council can then use the results to refine and focus the proposals and develop a workable project plan.

- 5.2 In conjunction with the community survey, the Clerk will also seek pre-planning advice from Eastleigh Borough Council and legal advice from the Council's Solicitor.

6. FUNDING

- 6.1 The costs of the community café will be funded through a combination of developers Section 106 contributions and monies held in the Council's Ear Marked Reserves. Additionally, the Council's Internal Auditor has advised that the Council look to spend sums from its general reserves which are now too high.

- 6.2 As a rough guide the Council has the following funds available: -

Section 106 (agreed at the LAC meeting on 10 March) - £ 157,943.43

Ear Marked Reserves - £42,000

General Reserves - £15,000 (to be agreed)

Crowdfunding (aim) - £10,000

Fountain Café Contributions - £10,000

Total - £ 234,943

- 6.3 Members of the Task & Finish Group have already received offers from business and skilled individuals for free construction materials, internal fit-outs and advice. In addition to this, the Group would like to pursue the idea of a community led build project. It is hoped that getting the community involved at the project's infancy, will install a sense of civic pride and ownership.

- 6.4 The Task & Finish Group are not proposing that all of the above funds be spent solely on the Café building, but rather suggest that appropriate level of funds to support the project be ring fenced, with the remaining funds being used to enhance the surrounding park.

- 6.5 The Clerk and Operations Manager suggest as a priority, that pathway improvements and enhancements to soft landscaping and boundary fencing be undertaken. The Clerk has also been investigating the costs of a modest splash pad. Investigations into the wider enhancements will be undertaken alongside the Café project by Officers. And full budget costings be presented at a later date.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Clerk has sought advice from the Council's Solicitor regarding modelling options for the management of the site/café. He has advised of the following options: -

Option 1: The Parish Council fund the total project and lease the building (non-repairing) and land to the Community Café via a peppercorn rent.

Option 2: The Parish Council grant the Fountain Café CIC a significant proportion of the build costs (using relevant legal powers) with conditions and a lease the land to the Charity at a peppercorn rent.

- 7.2 The Council will need to consider which option it prefers and hold further discussion with the Fountain Café to determine which option they would also like to pursue. The aim of these discussion is a mutually beneficial arrangement that feels comfortable for both parties and limits risk for both organisations. The objective of which is to continue positive partnership working relationship and long-standing collaborative innovative project.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 8.1 That the Council gives its approval in principle that a not-for-profit community café be placed on the Shorts Road site, currently occupied by the derelict scout hut;
- 8.2 That the café be run by The Fountain Café Community Interest Company;
- 8.3 That the project be phased, starting with the erection of the Café and then ancillary community provision such as creative spaces meeting rooms, a men's shed workshop, disabled parking, community fridge and hard & soft landscaping;
- 8.4 That a community consultation exercise be undertaken seeking residents' views on these proposals;
- 8.5 That the Clerk undertake further investigations as the legal arrangements; and
- 8.6 That a final project proposal/business plan be brought the Council for approval in May 2021.

For further information please contact:

Melanie Stephens, Parish Clerk
clerk@fairoak-pc.gov.uk

OR

Cllr Kristina Forfar
Chairman of the Task & Finish Group
Kristina.forfar@fairoak-pc.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Council Report 17/02/20