

Report to:	Scrutiny and Overview Committee	19 October 2023
Lead Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bill Handley (Lead Cabinet Member for Communities)	
Lead Officer:	Anne Ainsworth (Chief Operating Officer)	

Northstowe – Community Facilities Update

Executive Summary

1. This report provides an update on planning and delivery of community facilities at Northstowe.
2. The report recommends that Scrutiny and Overview Committee notes the progress towards delivery of the community facilities at Northstowe, acknowledging the additional investment provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and the Shared Prosperity Fund that has been required to deliver this provision.
3. The report also outlines how lessons learned from other sites have informed the phasing and delivery of community facilities at Northstowe.

Key Decision

4. No. There is no key decision.

Recommendations

5. The report asks the committee to note the following:
 - (i) The headline delivery timeline for the key community buildings the district council became obliged to deliver at Northstowe.
 - (ii) The benefit of appropriately phased delivery of key community infrastructure.

Reasons for Recommendations

6. Background

7. Master developers of Phase 1 (L&Q, formerly Gallagher Estates Longstanton Ltd) and Phase 2 and 3 Northstowe (Homes England) have been obliged to deliver comprehensive community infrastructure either by condition or through the respective s106 developer contribution agreements associated with each phase of development.
8. Unusually the Section 106 agreement for Northstowe allowed the Master Developers to pass responsibility for building the Community Buildings to the District Council
9. As a consequence, in Phase 1, where L&Q are the master developers, the District Council was passed the responsibility of building both Phase 1 Community Centre and the Phase 1 Sports Pavilion. The Council was provided a financial contribution by L&Q that formed part of the Section 106 agreement
10. Similarly, in Phase 2 where Homes England are the master developer, the Council now has responsibility for delivering both the Civic Hub, to be built within the town centre, and the Phase 2 Sports Pavilion in the Eastern Sports Hub. Again, the developer has provided a financial contribution as per the Section 106 agreement.
11. Funding provided by the respective Section 106 agreements is insufficient to build these facilities to the required specification. Council agreed in July 2022 to provide additional funding to meet the shortfall needed to create sustainable facilities to the required standard and this has been further supplemented by an allocation from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Shared Prosperity Fund.
12. In addition, the Council has brought forward a temporary community centre in Phase 1, to bridge a gap in provision following closure of the Community Wing at Pathfinder Primary School and the opening of the Phase 1 Community Building in the Local Centre.
13. The Council has acquired the Phase 1 Local Centre and Enterprise Zone and has made progress towards developing a coherent master plan for this area to bring forward a vibrant employment quarter, the first element of which will be delivery of the Permanent Phase 1 Community Centre, the subject of a live planning application (23/03248/REM).

The Phase 1 Sports Pavilion

14. The Phase 1 Sports Pavilion and car park is constructed on land that transferred to the district council from L&Q. The freehold of the sports pitches (including the bowling green) that it supports are set to transfer to SCDC following a decision to acquire the land. This will allow the unification of the pavilion and pitches to form a single viable, operational unit.

15. The Phase 1 Sports Pavilion is designed to Sport England, FA and RFU standards, and provides over 950 square meters of space, including a large multi-use clubroom; commercial kitchen and servery; changing places facility; WCs; 6 player changing rooms, and 2 officials changing rooms.
16. The pavilion is exceptionally energy efficient. As well as being designed to minimise heat-loss, it also benefits from additional carbon-reducing technology including air-source heat pumps, solar PV panels, and a waste-water heat-recovery system. Externally, the pavilion site also provides charging points for electric vehicles.
17. The pavilion and car park has been constructed by Pentaco, from whom the Council expects to accept Practical Completion week commencing 9th October.
18. Since the pavilion construction has been undertaken by SCDC, the Council has led on determining the most appropriate governance approach and, with the agreement of the local community, has opted to outsource the operation to a specialist sports provider.
19. SCDC undertook a full procurement process to secure a sports specialist to operate the pavilion and sports pitches. The leasehold of the land and buildings will be offered to the operator, who will keep any profit generated (less contribution to a sinking fund to be used when facilities need to be updated) but is required to undertake management and maintenance responsibilities as set out in Appendix B.
20. Elite Sports UK has been awarded the contract and they will be required to operate the facility in line with the detailed specification which formed part of the Invitation to Tender (which was devised with the benefit of advice from Strategic Leisure Ltd). There will be an on-site presence from the operator and the provision to make bookings on-line via an App or in person. The provider is currently recruiting locally to build its delivery team. Depending on the speed of recruitment, the operator expects to open the facility by the end of October; they plan to fully mobilise at the earliest point possible, to capture bookings for the Artificial Turf Pitch over the winter months. Their business model relies on supporting the growth of local teams, rather than a dependency on attracting larger commercial operators, which draw from a wider geography. This approach should contribute to the development of a vibrant sporting culture in Northstowe, building on the work of the Sport England Active New Communities programme which provided seed funding and support to establish a number of sports groups. Northstowe Sports and Wellbeing Group provides a broad representation of these pre-existing sports groups and will be key to ensuring these groups liaise effectively with the management of the facility, see paragraph 21.
21. Longstanton Bowls Club is to provide management and maintenance of the bowling green (with the benefit from a licence agreement with SCDC). This relocation has the support of its current membership and they have plans to extend their membership further within Northstowe and plan a programme of

multi-general activities to promote the sports of bowls to a younger demographic.

22. A management board, involving SCDC, Northstowe Town Council, Longstanton Bowls Club and Northstowe Sports and Wellbeing Group has been established via a Memorandum of Understanding, thus providing community involvement in oversight of the operator and bringing together all those with an interest in its effective operation.

The Temporary Community Centre, Phase 1

23. In March 2023 the Council's New Build team, working with consultants AR Urbanism, secured planning permission for a temporary community centre located in the Phase 1 Local Centre. Working closely with supplier, Portakabin, the Council managed to ensure that the centre was open only 4 months after the grant of planning permission. The building, which is rented, has planning permission for three-years, within which period the permanent community building is expected to be delivered.
24. The Council opened the temporary community centre in July 2023. In addition to rentable space for a wide variety of community led activities, the facility provides touchdown space for SCDC officers, including Northstowe Community Development Officers, the Northstowe Town Council offices and accommodates a variety of statutory services, including Child and Family Centre services, Health Visitor, baby weigh clinics and Midwifery services.
25. The Council has leased an office to the Town Council and offers other statutory providers guaranteed space through licence agreements. Community bookings can be made online, with all information provided via a dedicated webpage, [Temporary Community Centre - South Cambs District Council \(scambs.gov.uk\)](https://scambs.gov.uk) with availability and programmed activity advertised by way of a [Google Calendar](#).
26. The Temporary Community Centre is governed by a Management Board, formed as a result of a Memorandum of Understanding between the district council, Northstowe Town Council and Northstowe Hub.

The Permanent Community Centre, Phase 1

27. The master developers of Phase 1, L&Q, passed the responsibility for building the Community Centre to the Council, and this was to be on a piece of land identified by L&Q within the local centre. However, the purchase of the local centre and Enterprise zone by the District Council in March 2021 allowed the Council to masterplan the wider area, which involved relocating the community centre to a more prominent area of the site.
28. A Planning Application for the permanent community centre was submitted in September 2023 and is currently in the determination period. Details of the application can be seen on the [Greater Cambridge Share Planning website](#).

As SCDC are both the applicant and the Local Planning Authority the decision whether to grant planning permission will be made by SCDC Planning Committee.

29. The Council has worked hard to ensure Northstowe residents have had significant input into the design of the permanent community building. This has been via online discussions, drop-in events at the Northstowe Community Forum which the Council runs, presentations and a workshop with local young people.
30. The plans for the permanent community centre include the following spaces and their potential uses:
 - A main hall - A large multi-purpose hall for formal and informal events; public assembly, visual and performing arts, practice and tuition, lectures, and demonstrations.
 - Foyer / café - An informal community gathering space, serving hot drinks and snacks, for waiting, meeting, and greeting.
 - Kitchens - To serve the main hall and café.
 - Community support space.
 - A base for staff, Town Council offices, reception and booking point.
 - Consultation / meeting rooms – multi-purpose spaces for meetings and groups, visiting community workers, including police, and potentially NHS services.
 - Community co-working / shared space - A space for community book share / swap-shop and co-working, including a computer area.
 - Flexible activity space - A robust 'make space' for arts and crafts, workshops or other potentially messy or noisy activities, connected to the secure courtyard garden.
 - Storage
 - Toilets including a changing places facility.
 - A safe and secure outdoor space.
31. The planning application proposes that the centre is built using Passivhaus principles, which means it has very high standards of insulation and air tightness, reducing energy demand. Solar panels and ground source heat pumps are included to provide on-site renewable energy generation.
32. It is expected that most residents walk or cycle to the permanent community centre, so 70 bicycle parking spaces are included, along with equipment for four electric vehicle charging spaces and other necessary car parking.
33. The building plans also feature green roofs, flowers, plants and hedges, solar panels, integrated bird / bat boxes, deadwood features and a bee house. Combined, this has helped to achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain of 19% on the planning application, as part of the Council's commitment to enhancing nature and Net Zero.

34. Subject to planning permission being granted, the Council will then seek to appoint a construction partner to deliver the building. It is intended that the permanent building will be available for use and occupation before the end of the temporary building's 3-year temporary permission.
35. The Council will work with local representatives and likely users of the building to develop suitable management and governance arrangements well ahead of the opening of the building.

The Civic Hub

36. The proposed Civic Hub will be the largest of the Northstowe Community Buildings, and will be in Northstowe Town Centre, this is Phase 2 on the Northstowe Development where Homes England are the master developers.
37. The building will house a wide range of services including a library, health provision and a range of other services. It has been described as a 'Department Store for Life'.
38. The building will be around 5,000 square metres, spread over several floors. It will be designed to be highly flexible location with a range of community and civic functions.
39. The exact location of the building has not yet been agreed with Homes England, which means that detailed designs are not yet available. However, a steering group included the Council, County Council, Health and the Town Council has recently been established to oversee the process. Other groups will be set up with key stakeholders to consider, operational and governance issues and well as progressing the design.

The Phase 2 Sports Pavilion

40. Homes England have also passed the responsibility to deliver the Phase 2 sports pavilion to SCDC. This pavilion will be slightly smaller than that in Phase 1, measuring around 630square meters, though will serve many of the same functions.
41. Where the Phase 1 pavilion focuses primarily on rugby and football uses, the Phase 2 pavilion will be designed to respond to the pitches on the Eastern Sports Hub, which focuses on cricket usage.
42. Homes England have submitted a planning application for the groundworks associated with the design of the Eastern Sports Hub pitches (23/03209/REM). SCDC New Build and Communities Teams are working

closely with the master developer to ensure these designs meet the needs of the community and ensure the best conditions for the future design of the pavilion building.

43. The trigger for the Land Transfer to SCDC for the construction of the pavilion is no later than 500 occupied new dwellings on Phase 2 after which SCDC have 18 months to reasonably endeavour to construct the facility.

Other Activities.

- Enterprise Zone

44. In March 2021 South Cambridgeshire District Council acquired 11.19 gross acres of enterprise zone land at Northstowe. The Council is currently purchasing the remaining parcel of Enterprise Zone land which was previously identified as a Household Waste Recycling Centre. Cambridgeshire County Council has confirmed this is being provided elsewhere and is not required at the town. This additional investment would take the total to 15.22 acres. This purchase will give the council ownership of the entire Enterprise Zone along with the adjacent Local Centre to deliver a project across the site.

45. SCDC is developing a masterplan for the site, based on several 'fundamentals' that are important for future development. These are:

- Prioritise connectivity to the wider Northstowe community and the Guided Busway.
- Green and blue infrastructure.
- Sustainable performance of buildings targeting net zero sustainable performance.
- High quality public realm and connections.
- Successful integration with the wider Northstowe community

46. The Council is testing the market with preliminary talks with major developers and businesses with a view to gain insight into how best to deliver this site. Future reports will be presented to members on this subject.

- New Council Housing

47. SCDC Housing have been successful in securing the s106 homes on Northstowe Phase 2B (Keepmoat) and also on the site known as "Endeavour Estates" which sits within the Northstowe Ward but outside of the Masterplan area.

48. Together these sites will provide 103 new council houses – 90 for affordable rent and 13 for shared ownership. The New Build Team will ‘bid’ for other properties in line with the Councils New Build Strategy.

49. SCDC Housing will also be the beneficiaries of the Northstowe Starter Homes which will ensure long term investment in housing in Northstowe.

- **Community Development**

50. The section 106 agreements provide funding for Community Development Officers. These officers are employed by the Council and their role is to help build a sense of community at Northstowe by working with the Town Council and local groups to establish networks, groups and activities.

51. Although not a physical community building, the Community Development Officers in the Communities Team have helped to support the establishment of the allotments at the town and an allotment society to organise the ongoing management of this locally. This has successfully brought the community together and provides opportunities to improve health and wellbeing.

52. The officers have supported the initiation of a network of groups at the town that range from arts and faith groups to sport and recreation. As the town grows the officers will continue to support this as the communities needs change.

53. The team currently manage the day-to-day operation of the temporary community centre, including ensuring the governance gives the opportunity for the community to be involved and have previously overseen the running of the Community Wing at Pathfinder Primary school that provided a community building for community activity when the first residents moved in.

Implications

54. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

55. Not from this report. The financial implications have previously been reported to Council in July 2022

Staffing

56. Not directly

Risks/Opportunities

57. Not from this report. These risks and opportunities were reported to Council in July 2022 and the Council maintains an ongoing risk register.

Equality and Diversity

58. Not from this report. However, the community buildings specifications have disabled-adapted facilities including Changing Spaces. This ensures access for all and encourages inclusivity.

Climate Change

59. Not from this report. However, design decisions made with regard to the heating, cooling, and ventilation of the sports pavilion and integration of renewable technologies, including air-source heating, solar pv, waste-water heat recovery and increased air-tightness levels will reduce carbon emissions as well as helping to achieve long-term financial sustainability of the combined facility. Similar standards are included in the planning application for the submitted plans for the permanent community centre, and future buildings delivered by the Council.

Health & Wellbeing

60. Not from this report. However, as with any new development, many people moving to the town will be forming new social circles and creating links that will support positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Good quality community spaces and sports provision will play a key role to ensure a sense of community and a place to meet and improve opportunities for integration with surrounding communities.

Consultation responses

61. There has been no specific consultation on this progress report. However, there has been extensive consultation undertaken on the Community buildings, and this will continue with the building that have not yet been completed. Examples of consultation include.

- Pre-planning consultations for the Phase 1 sports pavilion were carried out with Cambridgeshire FA, Cambridgeshire RFU, Longstanton Parish Council and Meridian Trust. Early designs were presented at the Northstowe Community Forum and Drop-in. This was all undertaken in anticipation of the

resulting facility becoming a single operational unit with the sports pitches, which it is designed to serve.

- Full statutory consultation on the Phase 1 sports pavilion was undertaken as part of the planning process.
- A range of community and public service partners were consulted on the design of the temporary community centre and a full statutory consultation was undertaken as part of the planning process.
- A range of community and public service partners were consulted on the design of the Permanent Phase 1 community centre and a full statutory consultation has recently been undertaken as part of the planning process, with the application yet to be determined.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

62. Outsourcing the management and maintenance of the Western Park sports facilities will afford business opportunities to local contractors and sub-contractors in the leisure market.

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

63. SCDC's Asset Management Strategy recognises that as a housing provider we are about more than just bricks and mortar – that we look to build communities that can thrive and grow. Our Business Plan 2020-25 reflects this and commits to delivering in Northstowe the community facilities that will support housing delivery, including the phase 1 sports pavilion and community centre, and the phase 2 civic hub and pavilion.

Being green to our core

64. SCDC'S Business Plan 2020-25 commits to identifying and delivering opportunities to reduce carbon emissions from our estate. The designs for the Community Buildings account for the use of renewable technologies.

Background Papers

- Report to Cabinet: Northstowe Phase 1 – Section 106 Funding: February 2014
- Report to Cabinet: Northstowe Phase 2 – Community Infrastructure Delivery & Requirements: July 2015
- Report to Cabinet: Northstowe – Update and Recommendations July 2022
- Report to Council: Northstowe – Update and Recommendations July 2022

Appendices

Appendix : Plan of Management and Maintenance responsibilities, Western Park

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