

Taunton Deane Borough Council

EXECUTIVE 20th August 2008

Report of Leisure Development Manager

Portfolio holder: Councillor Lees

1 Executive Summary

The Council's Forward Plan Team is consulting on a Planning Obligations Strategy which will include a requirement for developers to contribute to the provision of community halls. The Council currently has no policy which sets out the reasons for its support for community halls nor which provides the evidence for negotiations with developers to set out the standard for their provision in new developments or for contributions from small developments.

With over 20,000 new homes and the resulting 50,000 new people moving to the borough in the coming years it is important to plan for their needs.

This report sets out the conclusions of the desk research and consultation into the existing provision of community halls, the draft Policy and Standard and the next steps for these being adopted by the Council. (The research report is available separately)

The research concludes that every new dwelling built should provide a contribution to local community hall provision and that the use of the contribution should depend on the location of the development: developments in Taunton town centre contribute towards extending existing public buildings for public use; developments in rural villages should be used to improve existing halls and the new urban extensions should provide new community halls and/or improve existing halls.

2 Purpose of the report

To allow Members to discuss the revised Vision, Policy and Standard for community centres and community halls which has been developed to reflect the findings of the research, the views of Members of the Strategy and Performance Panel and of village hall committees and the Community Council for Somerset.

3 The research and consultation undertaken

The research undertaken is described along with the findings in the separate research document available on request (covering the Council's historic role, definition of a community hall, value of community halls, audit of quantity and calculation of catchments including lists of halls, audit of quality including list of possible improvements to halls, consultation with the Strategy and

Performance Panel and other partners, hall equipment costings and management costings) The findings and proposed actions are summarised in the table below:

	Comment	Action
1	It is important to ensure that shared use buildings, such as joint school/community venues, have adequate protection for their community use should there ever be a threat to the partner such as closure or relocation of a school.	Included in the policy
2	The value of community halls should be acknowledged in a policy and vision statement by the Council.	Policy includes a vision statement
3	A sensible way to cater for additional demand in the unparished area of Taunton is to fund additional community space in existing or planned public buildings such as the planned new youth centre, YMCA, Brewhouse extension, new Library and any new schools.	A statement is included in the policy on this.
4	There is evidence that there is a need to provided one hall per 1495 (equivalent to 650 dwellings) in new urban developments.	This forms the basis of the standard of provision in the policy.
5	All new developments of 650 dwellings or more should provide a new hall if there is not one within a mile of the development or if the existing hall is already serving a population of 1495 or more. If the existing hall can be improved to take the additional usage, contributions should be sought to fund these improvements.	The policy requires extension to an existing hall as a preference if this is possible.
6	All new developments of one house or more should contribute to the cost of improvements to local community hall.	To be articulated in the Planning Obligations Strategy.
7	The local catchment for a hall is 1 mile.	This is the basis of the development of the standard for community halls.
8	It is important to ensure that shared use buildings, such as joint school/community venues, have adequate protection for their	Policy requires protection of the

	community use should there ever be a threat to the partner such as closure or relocation of a school.	money and access.
9	New community hall is needed in east Wellington and in one other location in the town possibly in conjunction with other community service providers including Wellington Town Council.	To be taken up in the Local Development Framework.
10	Buildings need to be flexible to react to changing needs.	Included in the policy.
11	“Hallmark” standard could be part of the standard for managing community halls.	Included in the policy.
12	When community halls are provided in new developments it is important that community development work is funded to set up the managing body for the building, to assist with the detailed design and equipping of the building, to generate interest in setting up clubs and organisations to run the activities that will make use of the hall.	Included in the policy.
13	When new halls are provided a pump-priming sum is needed and maintenance for the early years.	Included in the policy.
14	High density new residential developments will need a greater range of accommodation in their community halls with meeting rooms as well as a main hall to cater for the local demand.	Three levels of provision included in the policy with requirement for halls to be designed for future enlargement.
15	Those halls falling short of the standard could be improved to accommodate additional usage arising from new residential development.	Policy states that improvement of existing halls to be a first priority for developer contributions if within the catchment of a development.
16	There is some consideration being given to widening the traditional scope of services provided in community halls.	Included in the policy.

17	When funding is available for improving a community building it should only be used on buildings other than the community hall if there is clear demand from the community for this in lieu of improving use of a sufficient scale to justify the use of the money in this way in preference to improvements to the community hall and there is a legal agreement to protect sufficient community use to justify the amount of funding.	Included in the policy.
18	Previous comment about protection for community use in the case of school closure to be amended to cover all issues that might affect the primary building user or owner. This should include compensation for the community to secure access elsewhere or to provide community facilities.	Included in the policy.
19	The lease of a community building to a community managing organisation should include a requirement for a business plan, maintenance schedules and targets for community activity and involvement.	Included in the policy.
20	There should be a difference in the scale of provision in the urban extensions planned to that required of a small village.	Three levels of provision included in the policy with requirement for halls to be designed for enlargement.
21	Room sizes in the standard should only be applied to extensions to existing community halls as a guide and not imposed.	Noted
22	The Standard for a hall should include the requirement to provide broadband connection and car parking (there was one comment saying broadband is not needed)	will add both broadband and parking into the Standard for Village Halls
23	There is a need to protect community buildings to avoid them being converted to another use without consideration of local needs.	an extra clause in the Policy will be inserted and Planning/Legal Services consulted about a condition on

		all community building planning approvals. This will be applied whenever appropriate
24	The Council should ensure that the managing organisation has the capacity to run the building adequately and undertake an annual inspection of community buildings it owns	is covered by the paragraph in the Policy about quality managing organisations
25	Community Halls should receive support from Council Tax	No action as Parish Councils are able to levy precept if they wish
26	The management standard applied should be the Hall Mark scheme run by the Community Council for Somerset with 3 levels	Policy amended to apply this standard to managing organisation taking over a new hall or applying for grant aid or to use developer contributions
27	If there is a stage provided, a meeting room should be capable of being adapted for changing by adults and children with appropriate partitioning	Amend standard
28	Air conditioning is not necessary and is not environmentally friendly or cheap to run	Amend standard
29	Needs to be a statement about the building being fully accessible in line with ACRE Factsheet 25.	Amend standard
30	Consider including noise limitation measures	Amend standard
31	Need to include requirement for well distributed power points, blackout curtains and a screen.	Amend standard

4 A vision for community halls in Taunton Deane

Based on the findings and conclusions reached during research into the provision and need for community halls in Taunton Deane, the proposed vision for TDBC for community halls is:

“Every community should have a community facility which is open to everyone and is a focal point for community activities for all age groups in the community.

“The building should be kept clean, warm and safe and be well maintained to ensure it is fit for its purpose, meets equality of access needs and health and safety standards. It should aim to provide a scale of accommodation as described in the Council's Standard for Community Buildings and be flexibly designed and well managed to meet the future needs of the community.

“Wherever possible and certainly when new buildings or extensions are planned, sustainable construction techniques should be used. The buildings should also be designed to take into account the possibility of antisocial behaviour and the need to reduce its impact on the environment”

5 A Policy to put the Vision into Action

5.1 Support for communities

The Borough Council will continue to support efforts by local communities to provide and improve community buildings, community centres and community halls, as it has for many years, especially where there is identified unmet need for such facilities or potential to extend the range of uses or services an existing building can accommodate.

5.2 Providing for new demand

The Council will ensure that demand for community halls generated by the creation of new homes is catered for within easy reach of the new homes, by requiring house builders to contribute towards the improvement of an existing building or the provision of a new one. Extending an existing building will be the first option for consideration to provide for the new demands for community buildings. In the unparished area of Taunton, funding community access or facilities in existing public buildings will be the normal course of action.

Where there is no immediately obvious course of action for providing for the needs of the new residents, the contributions will be held by the Council for ten years to enable time for a site and match funding to be found. If the money is unspent after this time, it will be returned to the developer.

5.3 Flexible, well managed buildings

All community halls funded by the Council through grant aid or developer contributions will be required to planned to be flexible to respond to changing demands in the future. The managing organisation will be required to provide evidence that it is capable of managing the building to a high standard and a business plan for the building covering plans for its maintenance, funding, promotion, equal access, environmental issues and targets for a good cross section of community use. The Community Council for Somerset's Hall Mark Scheme will be applied to all organisations applying for funding or to manage a new building. The levels (1-3) will be applied in stages: for new halls the organisation must have achieved Level 2 before taking occupation of the building and Level 3 within 18

months; existing organisations must have Level 1 to be awarded funding and agree to achieve Levels 2 and 3 in 6 and 18 months respectively.

5.4 Scale of and triggers for new halls

TABLE 1

Basic Standards for the Provision of Community halls in Taunton Deane	
Population threshold	Scale of provision
Less than 1495 residents within one mile.	A main hall with toilets and kitchen.
1495-2149 residents within one mile.	A main hall, toilets, kitchen and a meeting/activity room.
2150 or more residents within one mile.	A main hall, toilets, kitchen and two meeting/activity rooms and a further meeting room or usable space for every additional 650 dwellings.

A new community hall will normally be required if the quantity standard of one hall per 1,495 people will be deficient either as a result of the proposed housing development, or because the proposed housing development adds to an existing deficiency.

If a housing development is large enough in itself to generate a need for a new community hall then, wherever possible, the hall should be provided on-site. The community hall should meet the adopted quality standard reflected in the Vision.

5.5 Developing the building brief

Where a new hall is to be provided in its entirety the contribution will include the appropriate proportion of the cost of a Community Development Worker, equipment for the building as well as its construction and three year's maintenance funding for utilities and insurance and other running costs.

Sustainable construction techniques should be used throughout new buildings and wherever possible in extensions to existing buildings. The impact of the building on the environment both in its construction and its future operation must be minimised. The buildings should be designed to take into account the possibility of antisocial behaviour.

5.6 Enhancing existing buildings

If it is not possible to provide a new building on site in accordance with the Vision, or the proposed housing development is not large enough to generate a need for an entire new community hall in itself, but creates (or adds to) an existing deficiency in

community hall provision, then a developer contribution will be required towards the new provision or the enhancement of a community hall off-site. In this case a proportion of the land cost will be required in addition to the building cost but the contribution towards a community development worker and maintenance will not be required.

5.7 Accessibility

Wherever possible, the site should be well related to public transport, cycle paths and pedestrian routes including public rights of way.

If the development is not big enough to generate a new building in its own right and there is not one within a mile which could be enhanced, the population of the new development should be added to the existing population of the local area and a new building of a reduced size constructed. This should be designed in such a way as to facilitate future enlargement.

There may be occasions where both improvements to an existing building and the provision of new one will be appropriate if the development is of sufficient scale.

A developer contribution to enhance an existing community building will be required if there is a suitable building within a one mile radius of the centre of the proposed development that could be improved to meet the quality standard and remain within the quantity standard of one hall per 1,495 people or 650 dwellings.

There may be more than one community building within the one mile radius that does not meet the quality standard. In such cases, the developer contribution will be allocated to the community hall that is closest to the development site and the most appropriate for extension. However, if all community halls within the one mile radius meet the quality standard, then the developer contribution for enhancement will be waived.

5.8 Protecting community use

Where the community hall is constructed as a shared use building (eg school) a legal agreement will be required that protects the value of the community contribution to that building and the community's right of access should there be a change of circumstances affecting the partner organisation.

Where there is a clear demand from the community to use the funds to improve a public building that is not primarily a community hall, evidence will be required to demonstrate that the amount of community access will be commensurate with the investment and a legal agreement to secure the principle and scale of community use must be entered into. This must include a compensation clause to allow alternative community access to other facilities.

Where a new community building is provided a condition of planning permission will be requested to prevent the building being converted for non community uses in the future without a thorough assessment of local need and alternative options.

5.9 Calculation of the community hall contributions from developers

If a contribution towards a new hall off-site is to be made, this calculation will include an element of land cost. The calculation for improvements to existing halls does not include land cost unless there is a need to purchase land for the project.

Capital cost of building

In 2008 the cost per square metre for the construction of a community building is £1,769. This is based on the SPONS Architects and Builders Price Book item for “General Purpose Halls” with an addition for fees and administration. (The cost in 2006 was £1350 per square metre to which 4.5% per year has been added in inflation for building costs and 15% for fees and 5% administration). This is broadly in line with the average of the cost per square metre of 4 community halls built in the last few years which with fees was £1659 per square metre.

The floor area of the community hall for a community of 2,150 people as described in the draft standard is 440 square metres. Taking the average household occupancy of 2.3 persons, this means that 935 dwellings will generate a need for a hall of this size. This equates to 0.47 square metres per dwelling.

Applying costs of £1,769 per metre gives a contribution per dwelling of £831 for improvements to an existing hall excluding any contribution towards the cost of land.

Equipment contribution

The cost of equipping the building for use must also be included in the contribution calculation. Appendix J has the full list of equipment for a new hall which costs £41,283 (2008). This sum equates to £44.15 per dwelling to be added to the sum per dwelling for construction costs.

Maintenance contribution

The average cost of maintaining a community hall over a year is £10,197 (2008) Appendix I gives the breakdown. It is reasonable to provide 3 years cover for these costs to enable the new hall committee to get started from nil bookings. This is equivalent to £32.72 per dwelling.

5.10 The Standard for a community hall

This specification is based on previous consultation with the Village Halls advisor for the Community Council for Somerset, the guidance in the ACRE guide for village hall committees: Plan, Design and Build and on Sport England Guidance Briefs.

The site for the community hall must be large enough to allow for the building, its landscaping and access paths, parking and for any shared spaces to work well. It must be built using sustainable construction techniques and with as small an environmental footprint as possible.

Entrance Lobby including buggy park

Main Hall

Purpose: multi purpose hall equipped for social events, drama and sports activities

Minimum size: 6.7metres high x 9 metres wide x 16.4 metres long plus elevated stage, blackout curtains and a screen.

Other Considerations:

- floor – should be sprung
- acoustics should be suitable for the activities intended
- lighting – a minimum of 305 lux with clear height maintained over the court of 6.7m
- air changes – a minimum of 1.5 per hour
- temperature – must be able to be maintained between 16 and 19°C
- noise, seating, chairs
- storage of 20m² should be provided

Activity Room

Purpose: to be used for classes and play groups etc

Size: 50 square metres

Considerations: Own access to toilets and kitchen and separate store of 20m²

Committee Room

Purpose: for groups of people to hold meetings

Size: 20 square metres

Considerations: separate store of 15m² and should be capable of being adapted for changing by adults and children with appropriate partitioning.

Kitchen

Purpose: for the preparation, presentation and storage of food and drinks

Minimum size: 40 square metres

Considerations: fully equipped to enable catering for large events in the hall. Also consider serving of food and drinks via a large 'hatch'. It must comply with the Food and Hygiene Regulations EC852/2004.

Toilets

Minimum provision: 4 x female wc's, 2 x hand wash basins and 2 x hand dryers ; 2 x male wc's plus 5 urinals, 2 x hand wash basins and 2 x hand dryers; 1 separate disabled wc; baby changing facilities.

Heating

Considerations: needs to be zoned so that the activity areas and rooms in the hall can be used separately and individually.

Equipment: The hall is to be fully equipped for use by the community with sufficient and well-distributed electric sockets, blackout curtains and a screen.

Noise: Activity areas need to be insulated to reduce sound between concurrent users and also possible noise nuisance to neighbouring properties

Disabled People: the facility must be accessible to all in line with ACRE Factsheet 25 and comply with part M of the Building Regulations.

Health and Safety: the building must comply with Environmental Health and Building Regulations requirements

Public Entertainments: The Building must be capable of being granted a Premises Licence.

Services: All services to be connected including telephone and broadband

Parking: there should be sufficient parking for expected regular usage

6 Recommendation

Members are recommended to adopt the Vision, Policy and Standard set out in this report and to support its implementation through the grant and planning systems.