

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1 FEBRUARY 2023

1 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PLAN

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Community Investment Plan at a meeting on 1 February 2023.
- 1.2 A copy of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is appended to this report.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 1 February 2023 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations for the Executive’s consideration.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) The Community Engagement exercise should include meaningful market research to achieve the best outcome for the Mill Hall.
- (2) Page 7.4 paragraph 4 - that the regeneration strategy is aligned with the new Local Plan.
- (3) That we look to work in partnership with charitable organisations and others that are able to access grants.
- (4) That the delegated spending authority is limited to £100,000; and any decisions in excess of this value are referred to the full Executive for decision.

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PLAN (CIP)

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The Committee is invited to scrutinise the information contained within the report setting out the Community Investment Plan (CIP) objectives and budget allocations to make recommendations to the Executive as it sees fit.

1.2 Proposed Recommendations

- (1) That the Community Investment Plan objectives set out within section 3 of this report be approved.
- (2) Following approval of the objectives, that the proposals set out within section 4 be approved.
- (3) That delegated authority be given to the Interim Director of Resources and the Director of Assets and Investment, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning & Assets and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Economy & Climate, to drawdown funds from the CIP ringfenced reserve to support the following:-
 - Up to a total of £255,000 to support expected works of £185,000 at the Mill Arts & Events Centre and up to £45,000 for replacing the furniture at the Mill Arts & Events Centre to enhance the offering for events there plus up to £25,000 to support the external resource to deliver the future plans and business case for the Mill Arts & Events Centre.
 - Up to a total of £350,000 to support the objectives of regeneration outlined within the CIP proposals. This money will support the technical work to bring forward regeneration sites in the district to RIBA stage 2 supporting the Regeneration Strategy approved by the Executive on 9 November.
 - Up to a total of £75,000 to deliver a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement process to support and align with the technical delivery of the regeneration sites.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 On 25 March 2022 Rochford District Council (RDC) agreed to enter a new Deed of Variation with Sanctuary Housing Association (SHA).

2.2 To support the ongoing place shaping work across the district, and with the New Deed of Variation, SHA provided £1,000,000 of funding. This fund was provided to the Council to use in relation to the community investment programmes, projects and initiatives.

- 2.3 This money is being held by the Council in a ring-fenced reserve, to be spent in accordance with the Community Investment Plan (CIP) objectives. The CIP is being presented to the Executive for agreement.
- 2.4 On 9 November the Regeneration Strategy 2022-2040 was approved.
- 2.5 The Council's Business Plan 2020-23 states: "We will invest in the future of the district to stimulate growth and prosperity as well as attracting investors and visitors. We will support residents, local businesses and organisations to create a district full of great life opportunities and choices, business growth and economic security."
- 2.6 Regeneration of sites in the district is central to this ambition and is ever more important to secure growth in the local economy and post pandemic recovery.
- 2.7 The vision for a Regeneration Strategy demonstrates the Council's appetite for taking a proactive role in regenerating its assets within the district. The primary objective is to support delivery of the Council's social purpose and strategic regeneration ambitions. This outlines the following:-
- Facilitate regeneration to bring forward high quality leisure and community spaces.
 - Facilitate regeneration to bring forward projects that produce new homes or other economic benefits as outlined in the Council's Business Plan.
 - Ensure that any regeneration opportunities are identified on the basis of robust appraisal processes and due diligence to manage risk and optimise the deployment of Council resources for its regeneration ambitions and social purpose.
 - Support the development of the story of place to lead and promote the Council's ambition for the district (Supporting Delivery of the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan in Response November 2019).

3 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The allocation of funding for the CIP will be prioritised based on the three key objectives that originate from the partnership with SHA and the Deed of Variation. These three objectives will assist RDC and SHA in their complementary roles as important Place Shapers and Makers within the district.
- 3.2 The funding will be allocated by ensuring the agreed projects, programmes or activities proposed to meet at least one of the CIP key objectives. The three objectives are:-

- To promote and deliver regeneration opportunities that support our residents, businesses, and visitors and provide a positive impact on their lives;
 - To support the development of sustainable homes and communities while prioritising those residents with the greatest needs;
 - To promote and support opportunities that focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents.
- 3.3 When drawing down any funding, officers will ensure the funding is utilised in such a way that the funding generates a greater return for the Council, opening up avenues of future income and investment to the Council, as well as supporting at least one of the three key objectives outlined.

4 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PLAN PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Following on from these objectives, the following proposals look to utilise the funding allocated against the CIP to begin to deliver the objectives outlined.

Proposal 1 Community Asset Investment (£250k)

- 4.2 To provide funding for capital investment for community assets that will be identified to support longer term operational plans.
- 4.3 The monies allocated are for investment at the Mill Arts & Events Centre to cover costs for the following totalling £185k: Garden Terrace area paving and replacement decking, replacement floor coverings, internal doors and wall alterations, fire protection system and electrical wiring in addition to replacing the furniture at this site at a cost of £45k.
- 4.4 In addition to this £25k is sought to support the high level objectives that have been outlined within the Mill Arts & Events Centre item 6 report and developing a business case around the sustainability of the asset. One of these objectives is to create a partnership hub that would improve relationships with all the Council's partners and look to improve the offering to the community. The aim of the hub will be to act as a key community building that will bring together a range of services from different organisations under one roof such as Essex Police, community safety partners, health, and other key organisations.
- 4.5 The vision for a partnership hub is not intended to replace any existing service nor is it to take away from other community hubs that do so very well. It is a reference to opportunities some of the other district's facilities have in creating a space to support other community organisations whilst still maintaining the use of the asset. The vision is to create a space whereby a wide range of partners such as health, Police and the voluntary sector and others could drop down and work as well as serve the public. This opportunity would improve

partnership working, collaboration, benefiting residents and improving outcomes. No one hub is the same; it can be whatever is needed to support the partners who wish to work with the Council.

- 4.6 This proposal will satisfy two of the objectives: Objective one. By beginning to look at how the Mill Arts & Events Centre can be regenerated to support residents, businesses and visitors to the site; Objective two. Creating a partnership hub to enhance the offering to the community and creating a positive impact on them. The partnership offering will look to improve the health and wellbeing offering to residents as outlined in objective 3.

Proposal 2 Community Engagement (£75k)

- 4.7 The Council will commission professional expertise to lead a community engagement process, engaging with the community and stakeholders and ensuring a clarity and consistency of message. This would ensure that the outcome is community driven and delivers positive outcomes for the Community Investment Plan. This piece of work will inform future regeneration opportunities within the district.
- 4.8 The work identified is to hold events with the public on the regeneration opportunities at the Mill Arts & Events Centre as well other opportunities within the district to ensure all stakeholders have the opportunity to feed their opinion into the work the Council is doing.
- 4.9 This engagement work will inform a strategy that will be followed for all future engagement on future ambitions of the Council in delivering its place shaping ambition. Any strategy would have an all Member engagement and would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee before any approval.
- 4.10 This drawdown of funding would look to ensure all three objectives outlined for the Community Investment Plan were achieved through a future pipeline of work.

Proposal 3 Regeneration Strategy (£350k)

- 4.11 To complete the technical work to bring forward sites to deliver the objectives of the emerging regeneration strategy. The strategy looks to support the Council's strategic regeneration ambition and delivery of the Business Plan objectives. The primary objective of the Council's regeneration strategy is to support delivery of the Council's social purpose and strategic ambitions. This proposal looks to bring forward high quality leisure and community spaces, as well as produce projects that deliver new homes and economic growth to the district, place shaping the district for its future community.
- 4.12 The Council needs to look across the district and be at the forefront of place shaping its district. The Council wishes to invest in various sites across the district to ensure the monies allocated in a fair manner and regeneration

opportunities are brought forward throughout the district in order to deliver sustainable homes for those most in need now and for future generations. To begin to build the pipeline and to lead by example the Council needs to bring forward sites to RIBA stage 2, to present and engage on.

- 4.13 Any sites brought forward for regeneration would return investment back to the Council by creating either a revenue stream or capital receipt that can be reinvested back into the community; thus the funds from the community investment plan have supported a wider investment piece across the district.
- 4.14 This proposal looks to satisfy all three objectives, but particularly concentrates on the second objective around housing delivery and ensuring homes are sustainable.
- 4.15 It is proposed that when any of these funds are required the Interim Director of Resources and the Director of Assets and Investment will consult with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning & Assets and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Economy & Climate before any funds are committed against the proposals.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The Community Investment Plan is required to enable the drawdown of funding to generate the enhancements of existing assets, regeneration opportunities and future investment opportunities within the district. An alternative option is to do nothing.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There can be inherent risk to specific schemes regarding regeneration. However, any scheme brought forward would identify and manage its risk through a risk register to mitigate risk.
- 6.2 There is risk that if the Mill Arts & Events Centre is not invested in, it will not remain an operational asset.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Any proposal or strategy would have due regard to the Council's environmental strategy ensuring that the Council's community investment objectives support the delivery of the Council's environmental strategy.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As set out to the Executive in March 2022, Sanctuary Housing Association has provided £1,000,000 of funding to support ongoing place shaping work across the district through a Deed of Variation. This fund is provided to the Council to use in relation to the Community Investment Plan programmes,

projects and initiatives and is held by the Council in a ring-fenced reserve, to be spent in accordance with the Community Investment Plan (CIP) objectives.

- 8.2 It is the intention that any funding drawn down will look to deliver opportunities for self-financing regeneration. Any income streams achieved from these projects will be returned to the Council to support and fund other regeneration projects.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is a legal requirement that the proper procurement process under the Public Contracts Regulation 2015 is followed when required.

10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010.