

## Refurbishment of March Community Centre

To: Commercial and Investment Committee

Meeting Date: 19 February 2021

From: Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Safety  
Tony Cooper, Assistant Director Property

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Key decision: No

Outcome: For the Committee to receive information relating to the refurbishment of March Community Centre and approve the 2 strand capital spend.

Recommendation: That the Committee:

- (i) Receives and records the report
- (ii) – Strand 1 - Endorse the capital refurbishment spend of the monies awarded by grant at no cost to the Council's core budget
- (iii) Strand 2 - Endorse the secondary capital investment to upgrade the net carbon zero heating system and roof repairs agreed through delegated governance
- (iv) Notes the procurement processes that have commenced across the totality of works (£735k) towards the appointment of contractors

### Officer contacts:

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### Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Mark Goldsack/Chris Boden

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 This report is brought to the Commercial & Investment Committee due to its remit for asset and property decisions. Under the Council's constitution there is a requirement for projects with an aggregate cost in excess of £0.5 million to be approved by Committee. This is based on the combined and gross expenditure of the project, irrespective of funding source.
- 1.2 The refurbishment of March Community Centre combines a £400k internal refurbishment and conversion for training and community facilities with maintenance expenditure of £150k for the building fabric and £185k for lifecycle replacement and climate change upgrade of the heating and boiler systems. Whilst each of these components is separately funded this provides for an aggregate gross expenditure on delivering the new March Skills facility of £735k.
- 1.3 The £400k refurbishment work is externally grant funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and has previously been approved through the Strategic Assets Property Board (SPAB) under delegated officer authority. The maintenance works and heating replacement are funded by CCC through the respective property and climate change budgets and approved through the respective programme governance. Each of these workstream budgets has been individually approved at Full Council, General Purposes Committee or under delegated officer authority as required. Governance and value for money in respect of the heating replacement will be dealt with via the appropriate processes under delegated officer approvals from the Environment & Sustainability Committee. This includes reference to SPAB and the requirement to achieve specified financial returns from the additional investment.
- 1.4 Whilst the individual components of the works have been approved through appropriate governance, the project in aggregate has not been put before this Committee. With the individual approvals in place the Committee is asked to receive and record the report due to the interconnecting investments into March Community Centre through different parts of the capital programme, this report provides an overview for this Committee regarding this important County Council asset. The service provision implications are a matter for Communities & Partnerships Committee. Governance requirements from the external funder have also already been satisfied.
- 1.5 Following the upgrade of the buildings, Cambridgeshire Skills will continue to pay for, via its ring-fenced grant and externally generated income, the internal fabric and utility running costs of the building (therefore no cost to the council core budget). CCC Property will retain responsibility for the exterior and structure of the building. The centre will also remain a community and education centre. The community will be able to continue to hire our facilities. The refurbished classrooms will be used for education, however when not in use the community will be able to use them. The refurbishment bid was to both increase training capacity and to expand education and community use.

## 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Cambridgeshire Skills' legal status is an internal department of Cambridgeshire County Council. It is in part, based at and operates its face-to face, direct delivery Fenland service

from March Community Centre. All 15 staff are CCC employees and CCC receive grant funding for our Service via the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the Department for Education to fund the operational costs of the service. We are not a traded service, nor an arms-length organisation. This funding is directly

- 2.2 Cambridgeshire Skills adult community learning service has recently refocussed its education and training programme to specifically target and address the need for education and training in Fenland, in line with the CPCA's post-Covid Economic Recovery Strategy, Skills Strategy and Local Industrial Strategy. The programme offer of qualification-based programmes with vocational pathways are focussed on getting people into work and improving work and pay prospects.
- 2.3 To facilitate the delivery of these programmes and the wider support necessary to help the most disadvantaged and furthest away from work in the Fenland area to access education and training, Cambridgeshire Skills has invested more resource and time into making March Community Centre, a venue that the service has managed for some years now, the main centre for Fenland's Adult and Community Learning Centre. Although a very well-located base, the building required some investment to provide further good quality, fit-for-purpose education, community and training spaces, facilities and services.
- 2.4 Cambridgeshire County Council is supportive of the new focus of its Service both in curriculum and geographical terms, and has provided March Community Centre as the building from which Cambridgeshire Skills can operate and deliver learning. The buildings, which consist of a main centre and two outer buildings, is the main site from which Cambridgeshire skills operates in order to target its programme delivery across Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. Built as a school in the early 1900's, the main building provides the ideal base for the Service as its core design was for education and training, and is well placed between the centre of town and the railway station in March. In addition, there are two outbuildings, that are currently unused, that are planned to be adapted to provide four additional workshops. The main centre and outbuildings require some internal redesign and refurbishment to provide the fit-for-purpose environment required to deliver education and training in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to fully maximise the potential opportunities that the site affords.
- 2.5 During February 2020, following a successful bid to the CPCA growth fund, the service was awarded a £400k grant to refurbish aspects of the centre. The outcome for acquiring CPCA Growth Fund monies was for CCC to make further investment in their building that will result in additional teaching rooms and workshops and an inviting, accessible local hub for learners in Fenland. It will also provide for a vibrant administrative base from which the Service will be able to reach out to communities across the local towns and villages to provide them with place-based learning opportunities that are so much needed in the area. General Purposes Committee has already taken the decision to utilise this funding for the purpose specified in the conditions from Combined Authority, creating a capital budget as a result. Were the Council not to utilise this funding for this purpose, the £400k would need to be returned to the funder (ultimately an EU programme but unaffected by Brexit).
- 2.6 The grant of £400k Growth Funding from the Combined Authority to provide the cash required to undertake the redesign and refurbishment work is in addition to, and separate from the annual £2.3m core grant funding from the CPCA and DfE.

2.7 The works have commenced on site and were due to be completed by the end of the 20/21 financial year to meet the £400k grant requirements. Following a review of the project earlier this month due to unexpected asbestos issues, Practical Completion of the project has now been pushed back to 28 May 2021. The CPCA Business Board has formally confirmed that the grant funding will remain available up until the end of June 2021 to allow adequate time for the project to complete. This removes the risk of losing the grant funding due to the re-programmed project timescales. The planned redesign and refurbishment is as follows:

- a) To make the main building fit-for-purpose by
  - Relocation of and increased toilet facilities including a changing space
  - Dedicated reception and admissions facility
  - Provision of advice and guidance room for learners
  - Adaptation of existing rooms to provide 3 additional classrooms
  - Additional office space
- b) To convert and refurbish two outbuildings (currently used for storage) to provide four community and teaching areas.

2.8 Once completed, these changes will provide a flagship centre in Fenland for Cambridgeshire Skills incorporating the following:

- 9 good sized teaching rooms
- a large hall and stage
- adapted space to provide for a range of learner advice, assessment and support facilities
- 4 workshops
- café
- adapted and upgraded toilets

2.9 Approval was sought from the Strategic Property Asset Board during March 2020 to move forward with the build project, within the timeframe and costs expressed within the application. Approval was granted and the next stage was to hand this over to the professionals in Property Services to procure the works and manage the build programme. This will ensure that contractors are procured from CCC's framework and this will help to manage and mitigate any risks.

## 2.11 Benefit, Service Growth and Impact

The changes resulting from this Growth Bid will enable the Service to meet the requirements of the CPCA Commissioning Strategy to provide the capacity to deliver and grow by offering a much larger and more diverse programme offer in high quality facilities. Cambridgeshire Skills has developed a new and targeted programme offer in line with the CPCA Skills Strategy to:

- Develop skills to gain a job
- Retrain/ reskill to change employment
- Upskill those in work, particularly those in low skill, low paid work
- Provide education and training opportunities to those who are furthest away from learning and work

- 2.12 The outcome of these works, will be the significant growth of a relevant, responsive and diverse skills development provision at the March Centre. In addition, through the location at the March Centre of the main operational base, the Service will be much better placed to reach out to the local communities across The Fens and provide the place-based learning opportunities that are needed to engage the most disadvantaged, hardest to reach and vulnerable.
- 2.13 The Service receives a delivery grant of £2.3 million for 2020/21. The focus of development this year is fundamentally redeveloping the programme offer to grow vocational and qualification-based programmes whilst at the same time reaching out and delivering targeted community based programmes, primarily in The Fens, but also in the local communities with high levels of disadvantage across Cambridgeshire.
- 2.14 The planned growth in 2020/21 resulting from the redesign and refurbishment of the March Centre will be in the region of 195 additional learners, following primarily Level 2 and Level 3 programmes in Agri-tech, Health and Social Care, Leadership and Management, Child Care, IT and Creative, and Business Improvement, in line with our corporate priorities and the CPCA Local Industrial Strategy..
- 2.15 The growth in 2021/22 will be in the region of 250 additional learners following Level 2 and Level 3 programmes in the key vocational areas identified above as well as some Level 5 provision in Leadership and Management and Teacher Training. The total funding required to deliver this additional programme as well as the existing base programme will be £2.6 million.
- 2.16 The Community Centre is included within the Property Services maintenance programme and a condition survey coinciding with this long term investment has identified key maintenance and replacement works required to ensure the building is maintained to a suitable standard for ongoing use. With the £400k investment in the internal refurbishment of the building it is imperative that the fabric and structure of the building are in an appropriate condition for the lifetime of this investment.
- 2.17 The condition survey identified a number of key areas of work required. These include significant repairs to the roof, the heating and hot water plant requiring replacement and critical internal works such as fire safety improvements. Property Services will undertake these works as part of the refurbishment as part of its ongoing estate maintenance programme. The initial works will cost in the region of £150k and this is funded by CCC from the existing rolling capital programme. The replacement of the heating system is planning to be carried out in FY2021/22 and will be funded through existing Facilities Management lifecycle budgets linked to the Energy Efficiency upgrades. The estimated cost, excluding grant funding, is £185k.
- 2.18 The individual components of the budget requirement have previously been agreed through an appropriate governance route:
- £400k Skills investment (grant funded by CPC), with corresponding budget revision agreed by the General Purposes Committee

- £150k maintenance works, funded through the rolling maintenance programme, total budget voted by Full Council, with operational deployment agreed by Officers through Capital Programme Board
  - £185k lifecycle heating replacements, utilising the Energy Efficiency Fund budget, voted by Full Council or existing Property Capital maintenance budgets as appropriate.
- 2.19 In total this is an exciting investment that enhances a key Council asset with considerable potential to improve outcomes for learners in the Fens and East Cambridgeshire for many years to come. This report is presented to C&I Committee to provide an overview of the different investments, totalling £735k, into the property and to ensure there is awareness of the combined works and contracts as set out. The retention and repair of March Community Centre and its refurbishment and use as a Skills Centre is considered an appropriate use of and investment in this property asset. As referred to above the proposed use and refurbishment was approved by the Strategic Property Assets Board (SPAB) in March 2020.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

#### 3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The report above sets out the implications for this priority below.

Housed in March Community Centre, the objectives for Cambridgeshire Skills is to deliver and use its externally sourced grant funding to support include:

- To advance education
- To relieve unemployment
- To relieve poverty
- To advance health
- To improve social mobility
- To improve digital inclusion
- The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation, in particular by the provision of facilities for the playing of sports and related activities

#### 3.2 Thriving places for people to live

The service has increased delivery in the targeted areas of need identified in local social and economic data. This has improved the work and life prospects of local residents.

#### 3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

We have engaged and provided skills to adults to improve support of children and families. Service Managers continue to work with the local primary schools and the Child and Family Centre Managers to devise pre-entry literacy and other courses and qualifications which will support improved literacy and other skills for local families. We are in the process of distributing 50 devices and internet dongles through the Connecting Families project to improve digital inclusion.

#### 3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

All work to be carried out during the refurbishment of March Community Centre has been approved by the Strategic Property Board and the new heating system complies with the Council's aspiration to be net zero carbon by 2050.

**4.1 Resource Implications**

The project requires significant investment in the maintenance and repair of the property to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The non-grant funded work forms part of the existing Property maintenance programme and will be incorporated into the refurbishment work.

**4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

No significant implications in this category.

**4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

No significant implications in this category.

**4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

The work carried out by the service is often with the county's most vulnerable residents and as such makes a positive contribution to issues of equality and accessibility.

**4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

The Service operates in partnership with local community and voluntary organisations.

**4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

At the heart of the Adult Learning and Skills Service is its local engagement and place-based delivery. The development of the service has resulted in the provision of three discrete learning centres, one in March, one in Cambridge City and another in Ely. In addition, the Service continues to work to identify accessible, local buildings from which to deliver community-based learning, however this is proving difficult in the current Covid climate.

The Governing Board has both County Council and District Council representation.

**4.7 Public Health Implications**

Public health are a partner of the Adult Learning and Skills Service and is represented on our Governing Board.

The Public Health implications of this paper are positive. Improving access to adult training opportunities with appropriate targeting and positioning of the services will help address health and wellbeing inequalities across Cambridgeshire

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Tom Kelly

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?  
Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?  
Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service  
Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Cllrs Steve Count and Jan French

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health  
Name of Officer: Val Thomas