

1. Submitted by Councillor Nancy Goodacre

Bookham Youth and Community Centre closed last year without replacement despite the efforts of residents and community groups who have been calling on Surrey County Council to plan a replacement building for many years. What support and encouragement has the new Mole Valley administration given to Surrey County Council to provide a replacement, so that residents can get this important facility back for our young people and our community?

Response from Councillor Stephen Cooksey, Leader of the Council

Thank you for your question and I would like to acknowledge the efforts you and the other Bookham Councillors have made to revive efforts to find a replacement centre and your intervention to resolve misunderstandings which had occurred.

Community facilities are exceptionally important. The closure of the current facility has been a matter of concern for some time and this Council has worked hard with the County Council, who own the site, to help them bring forward a solution that meets community objectives, is viable and also compliant with planning requirements.

This Council has agreed to support the provision of facilities on the Lower Road Rec site subject to the County Council obtaining the necessary planning permissions. We have offered the land at a peppercorn rent and have given access to enable various technical surveys to be undertaken and provided layout plans of the existing facility on the Lower Road Rec site. In terms of planning we have offered free pre-application advice and agreed applications for each of their alternative sites will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. I can advise Members that the planning application for the Lower Road Recreation Ground was received by the planning service on Monday 23rd November. The details of the application cannot be made public until it has been registered and validated to ensure all the required information is present. As soon as this is completed the proposal will be available to view on the Council's web site. Members will appreciate that we cannot guarantee the outcome of an application but I can assure everyone that there has been active and ongoing engagement with the County Council and their property, projects and external planning team.

Most recently senior Officers met with the Surrey project team on the 16th June and then with a revised Surrey project team on the 12th October to assist the County Council bring forward proposals for new provision. A more detailed discussion with officers on the planning aspect was held on 11th November 2020 and on the property aspect on 13th November 2020. Officers have met with the County project officer this afternoon for an update on progress. As I indicated earlier we have now received a planning application for the Lower Road Recreation Ground site but there remains uncertainty about the County Councils proposals for the existing site.

We must remember however that this is a County Council responsibility and whilst, as I have outlined, we are providing as much support as possible, the approach remains with the County Council. I can only hope that advice given is taken into account in order to assist with a positive outcome.