

REPORT

SUBJECT:	Future of the former Tudor Street Day Centre, Abergavenny
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	August 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	Grofield, Abergavenny

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To consider the officer recommendation relating to the future of the former My Day My Life Day Centre at Tudor Street, Abergavenny.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet agrees the following:

- 2.1 That the former My Day My Life Centre at Tudor Street, Abergavenny is declared surplus and transferred to Landlord Services.
- 2.2 That Landlord Services enter lease terms with 'The Gathering' community group for a 12-month occupation of the property at Tudor Street, Abergavenny.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The 15th November 2023 Cabinet decision determined that Tudor Street Day Centre was no longer required as the Abergavenny 'base' for the My Day My Life service. Whilst closed, the property has continued to be occupied by the service for storage as the new bases in Abergavenny and Monmouth were developed.
- 3.2 In the interim period, MCC have been supporting 'The Gathering' to occupy the Wellbeing Centre, former Tourist Information Centre, in Abergavenny. The Gathering are a local interest group with ambition to revive the property at Tudor Street and, as outlined in their mission statement, "provide a space for vulnerable adults who have learning disabilities/physical disabilities and/or mental health issues to socialise and take part in activities they want, based on individual person-centred plans".

- 3.3 The Gathering have been working with a panel of MCC officers consisting of representatives from Landlord Services, Social Care and Economy Employment & Skills to develop a business case which evidenced their ability to occupy and operate the building at Tudor Street. A draft business plan is attached within Appendix B. The business plan is supported by a copy of the group's constitution, evidence substantiating the hall demand/hire charges, and two letters of support.
- 3.4 The business plan proposes to accommodate various potential occupiers (i.e. classes/groups that may hire rooms) as well as operating their own activities. Suggested uses including a combination of wellbeing, educational and work experience activities, including movement classes, martial arts, music sessions, arts and crafts, learning to cook, radio, gardening opportunities.
- 3.5 It is the professional opinion of officers (referenced in 3.3) that the business case does not currently sufficiently evidence how a long-term agreement to occupy the property would be sufficiently financially sustainable or safeguard the interests of either MCC or The Gathering group. Further evidence is required to substantiate the levels of demand for this use, which is critical to the financial sustainability of an 'attendance fee' income model. Equally, further evidence is required to determine the viability of a number of donations and income assumptions within the model, as well as the profitability and operating model of a community café.
- 3.6 In order to support The Gathering to demonstrate proof of concept, and to strengthen the evidence base relating to demand for the service and financial forecasting, it is proposed that a 12-month lease is granted to The Gathering to enable them to execute their ambition for the space. This will allow for the service model, activities and financial plan to be tested. The agreement will transfer responsibility (inclusive of running costs and repair/maintenance) for the asset to the group, enabling them to relocate their existing operations at the Wellbeing Centre into the larger property at Tudor Street. This will support the group in the development of their business plan and test of their service model.
- 3.7 The 12-month lease will be subject to quarterly officer review, and the determination to offer any long-term agreement will be subject to the performance against the draft business plan. Ongoing monitoring will enable MCC and The Gathering to establish the merits and success of the proposal, and therefore suitability to continue under a longer-term agreement.
- 3.8 By granting a 12-month lease, MCC would be forgoing the opportunity to utilize the property for alternative purposes including for the development of residential property. The property has alternative development potential, being that it is within the development boundary. The property may be

subject to constraints under the proposed TAN15 Flood Map Changes, however details around TAN15's implementation are not yet known. A 12-month lease would safeguard MCC's ability to review the assets performance and potential uses beyond 2025/26.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

Option	Benefits	Risks	Recommendation
Do not declare the site surplus and retain for MCC services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The property could be repurposed to meet a yet-to-be-identified accommodation need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the property falls into disrepair and remains underutilized, in conflict with the commitments of the Asset Management Strategy to maximise the use of property. Reopening the property for an MCC service may introduce additional revenue costs and budget pressures. 	
Declare the site surplus and advertise for commercial uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The property could generate a commercial return. MCC would offset any ongoing running costs associated with the asset. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear commercial or retail use has been identified. The property requires investment to repurpose, which may prohibit our ability to identify a user or introduce capital costs to MCC. MCC would forgo the opportunity to support a community initiative at this location. 	
Declare the site surplus and dispose of the property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would enable a vacant asset to be repurposed to achieve other housing policy objectives. Would prevent the property from falling into disrepair or being under-utilized. Would generate a capital receipt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the property fails to be repurposed or developed and remains vacant. Public perception to the decision and opposition to the permanent closure and/or demolition of the facility. 	
Declare the site surplus and grant a 12-month lease to The Gathering group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would enable a vacant asset to be reused in the immediate future. Would enable The Gathering to test concept, and evaluation to take place on performance against the draft business case, such that a future decision could be taken on the long-term use of the property. Would enable policy objectives around community enablement and social value to be supported, in accordance with the Asset Management Strategy and Community & Corporate Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That MCC forgo an opportunity to repurpose or develop the site to meet other policy objectives. The short-term occupancy may restrict The Gathering's ability to source investment, or the reputational damage if they elect to refurbish at risk and subsequently the business plan and proposal was unsuccessful. That the asset fails to perform in accordance with the Business Plan and arrears created or the asset returns to MCC as a liability. The duplication of services could detract from existing community assets and tenants, impacting their own viability and sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. This will afford The Gathering further time to strengthen their business plan and evidence for long term occupation.

5. REASONS/CONCLUSIONS:

- 5.1 Having due consideration for the above, the panel recommends Option 4 - that The Gathering are granted a 12-month lease to occupy the property and demonstrate proof of concept.
- 5.2 Granting of the agreement will enable the group to address short comings in the business plan relating to the medium to long term sustainability of their proposals. The recommendations of the panel are made on balance, judgement and experience. Whilst it is acknowledged there is not one single failing of the business plan as drafted, there remains a number of areas requiring further clarification or refinement to reduce the risk exposure to both MCC asset and The Gathering as a group in the long term.
- 5.3 Given the current financial climate, MCC is seeking to develop opportunities to reduce financial pressures whilst developing and supporting community resilience and new ways of delivering services. The proposed lease of the property may secure the provision of the new facilities for the benefit of the community.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 MCC would generate a rental for hire of the property, as well as offset any ongoing holding costs (business rates and utilities) which would be met by the tenant. The tenant would likely be eligible for rental grant via the rental concessionary policy.
- 6.2 MCC will not incur any capital costs under the proposal, with the cost of ongoing operation and running costs met by the tenant.
- 6.3 By supporting these proposals, MCC would potentially be forgoing any alternative use and/or development of the property. The site has potential for the development of affordable housing (flats), for which there is limited opportunities within the existing portfolio.

7. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken, attached as Appendix 1.

Positive Impact:

- The proposal may enable people with learning disabilities / physical disabilities and mental health issues to access a new community initiative within a well-known property in Abergavenny.
- The proposal to offer the site for community development will enhance the availability of opportunities that are open, accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.
- Developing the site as a community asset/opportunity will further extend the range of opportunities and activities within the community which people with a disability can access.

Negative Impacts:

- The creation of a further facility in close proximity to a number of existing community assets may negatively impact the sustainability of existing community facilities.

8. CONSULTEES:

Lucinda Boyland – Community Development and Delivery Manager
Nicki Needle – Integrated Wellbeing Network Lead
Dan Francis – Finance Business Partner
Cllr Laura Wright - Ward Councillor for Grofield Ward
Jane Rodgers - Chief Officer for Social Care
Peter Davies - Chief Officer for Resources

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 - Draft Business Plan
Appendix 3 - Redline Plan

10. AUTHOR:

Nicholas Keyse – Acting Head of Landlord Services
Jane Rodgers - Chief Officer for Social Care