

Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 9 March 2023: Mildenhall Hub post implementation review

Report number:	CAB/WS/23/022	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	11 April 2023
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Decisions Plan: **The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.**

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendations: **It is recommended that Cabinet endorses:**

- 1. Subject to suggested actions below, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's conclusion that the Mildenhall Hub has met the strategic and environmental objectives set for it by Forest Heath District Council in 2018 and is making good progress towards the break-even financial test by year five of its operation.**
- 2. Subject to joint-funding and planning consent, adaptations be made to the eastern plaza to:**
 - Reduce the walking distance from disabled parking spaces to the eastern entrance;**
 - Create a disabled drop-off;**
 - Future-proof the future expansion of the Hub by providing more disabled parking spaces.**
- 3. When any works to the east plaza are complete, investigate, consult on and, if appropriate, introduce a Traffic Regulation Order to regulate the parking on site.**
- 4. The current and future capacity of on-site car parking should be taken into account as part of any proposals for expansion of education capacity at and adjacent to the Hub; and the Council, as Hub landlord, should make submissions to the Local Planning Authority, Highways Authority and/or education partners accordingly on behalf of the partnership.**
- 5. The final required highways audit of the Queensway/Sheldrick Way junction be commissioned in late 2023.**
- 6. The current and future capacity of the Queensway/Sheldrick Way junction should be taken into account as part of any highway appraisals for the delivery of the West Mildenhall masterplan and/or any proposals for expansion of primary and secondary education capacity at and adjacent to the Hub; and the Council, as Hub landlord, should make submissions to the Local Planning Authority,**

Highways Authority and/or education partners accordingly on behalf of the partnership.

- 7. Cabinet makes representation to Suffolk County Council regarding a light-controlled crossing being installed at the zebra crossing in the High Street leading to Church Walk, Mildenhall.**
- 8. To review progress against the year five financial test, a final report on the Mildenhall Hub Post Implementation Review be included in the Committee's work programme for 2026, subject to the completion of a scoping / key lines of enquiry exercise being carried out with the Strategic Director.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023, received Report number [OAS/WS/23/003](#), to carry out a post implementation scrutiny review of the Council's involvement in the Mildenhall Hub, which opened to the public in May 2021 and represented a combined public sector investment of over £40 million into facilities for Mildenhall and the surrounding area. The Hub is one of several hub projects completed, underway or planned in West Suffolk. Mildenhall Hub was designed by Concertus Design and Property Consultants and built by R G Carter Construction with project management from Currie and Brown.
- 1.2 The report follows on from an earlier and concluded scrutiny exercise in 2017 by establishing whether or not the Council's own involvement in the project was on track to achieve the desired long-term outcomes. It also sought to identify any remaining actions associated with delivering the original objectives of the project.
- 1.3 The scrutiny review carried out by West Suffolk Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023 was only a partial examination of the true scope of the Hub project and its outcomes as it represents the perspective of one organisation (West Suffolk Council) only. Also, nothing contained in the report represented the views or findings of any other partner organisation unless specifically attributed.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 As a broad structure to the scrutiny review, the Committee examined the following issues and to make recommendations to Cabinet/Council accordingly:
 1. Has the capital project achieved the objectives last set for it by the Council?
 2. How has the Hub performed in its first 20 months against its business plan and funding model?
 3. What remaining actions are there to deliver the Council's original objectives.
- 2.2 The report included information on the baseline position; delivery of strategic objectives (non-financial); impact of new leisure facilities; wider hub concept and other partners' facilities; environmental performance; external recognition; delivery of financial objectives and further actions to implement project objectives.

- 2.3 The report contained a typographical error which has been corrected in the online version and an explanation was emailed to members of the Committee in advance of the meeting.

In the table of capital costs in paragraph 5.7 of the report, all of the individual numbers themselves were correct but these actually added up to a new net capital requirement of £11,420,000 not £11,300,000. This then meant the summary figure for the variance from the 2018 estimate for the net capital requirement, shown on the first line of paragraph 5.9 is £1.3 million and not £1.18 million.

The Committee was reassured that the correct net capital requirement figure of £11.42 million was used to work out the borrowing costs in the revenue impacts table which was set out in paragraph 5.14. The error did not affect any of the numbers in the table, including the current overall net revenue position of £7,000, meaning the overall finding of the financial section of the report was unchanged.

- 2.4 The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs, presented the report and welcomed the Committee's support in flagging up some actions to reflect the learning from the first two years of operation. She also felt it was important to highlight the impact of future growth within the Hub itself and next door through the planning proposal for West Mildenhall so this could be considered when assessing the Hub's parking and highways arrangements.
- 2.5 The Committee scrutinised the report in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the future growth and expansion of the Hub; disabled access and drop-offs; the length of various partner leases; electric vehicle rapid charging points at the old Mildenhall swimming pool site; the old College Heath Road site and progress on transferring it to Barley Homes; the Hub's BREEAM and energy efficiency ratings and general environmental performance, and environmental credentials of 3G pitches.
- 2.6 The Committee went through each of the Cabinet Member's suggested actions in turn. Regarding action 4 the Committee felt the highways audit should be carried out in "late" 2023 and agreed to including the word "late" in the recommendation. This was to ensure that the audit reflected the higher amount of parent traffic in the winter months.
- 2.7 The Committee also discussed the impact of increased pedestrian traffic on vehicles using Mildenhall High Street and suggested that separate representations be made to the Highway Authority that they consider upgrading the existing zebra crossing on the High Street at the end of Church Walk to a light-controlled crossing. It was also noted that there would be value in a final Overview and Scrutiny review of the Hub in 2026 to ensure the Hub was still on track for meeting its financial objectives by year five of operation.

- 2.8 At the conclusion of the Committee's consideration of the report and vote, the Committee recommended that Cabinet endorses the actions as set out in the report and the Committee's own recommendations, which are set out on page two of this report.

3. Suggested actions

- 3.1 Suggested actions are summarised in the recommendations for this report above and were set out in section 6 of report number [OAS/WS/23/003](#). The Committee adapted these actions as explained in the previous section of this report.

4. Risks associated with the review

- 4.1 No risks associated with the scrutiny review itself. Risk associated with the Mildenhall Hub were part of the original decision making and normal risk management processes. The same would apply to the implementation of any proposals from this review adopted by Cabinet.

5. Implications arising from the review

- 5.1 Financial – see financial appraisal.
- 5.2 Legal compliance – any legal or regulatory requirements for specific aspects of the review are listed in the report.
- 5.3 Personal data processing – not applicable to this review.
- 5.4 Equalities – equality impact assessments were part of the original decision-making. Equality implications of specific aspects of the review are highlighted in the report.
- 5.5 Crime and disorder – nothing arising from this review.
- 5.6 Safeguarding – any safeguarding implications of specific aspects of the review are highlighted in the report.
- 5.7 Environment or sustainability – referred to in the report separately.
- 5.8 HR or staffing – no implications arising from this report.
- 5.9 Changes to existing policies – none required.

- 5.10 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups) – the Hub is a partnership project and involves large numbers of stakeholders. This is referenced in the report where applicable.

6. Appendices referenced in this report

- 6.1 None

7. Background documents associated with this report

- 7.1 All background documents associated with this report and the history of the project (including the previous scrutiny report) can be found at:
[Background reports \(mildenhallhub.info\)](http://mildenhallhub.info).