Cabinet



Title of Report:	Mildenhall Hu	ub Project
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/	031
Report to and date:	Cabinet	14 July 2015
Portfolio holder:	James Waters Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth Tel: 07771 621038 Email: james.waters@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Alex Wilson Director Tel: 01284 757695 Email: alex.wilson@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	To update Cabinet on progress with the Mildenhall Hub Project and identify next steps.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u>	that:
	(1) the initial conclusions from due diligence of the Business Case and next steps for the project, as outlined in this report, be approved;	
	(2) a single-site scheme be the Council's preferred option for consulting on the Mildenhall Hub project;	
	 (3) a budget of £50,000, to be funded from the Delivering the Strategic Priorities and MTFS Reserve, be approved to meet Forest Heath's share of initial project management and development costs; and (4) the Director be authorised to approve spending from this budget in consultation with the Leader. 	

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Key Decision:	definition	•	cision and, if so, under which
(Check the appropriate			Decision - ⊠
box and delete all those	Yes, it is a Key Decision - \square No, it is not a Key Decision - \square		
that do not apply.)	100, 10 15 11	iot a Ri	ey Decision - 🗆
	An execut	tive de	cision which, pending any further
			he Secretary of State, is likely to
	_		terms of its effects on communities
	_		g in an area in the Borough/District.
The decisions made as	a result of	this re	eport will usually be published within
			five clear working days of the
	e cision hav	ve elap	sed. This item is included on the
Decisions Plan.			
Consultation:	•	_	business case for the Mildenhall Hub
			based on extensive stakeholder
		_	agement and public and stakeholder
			sultation will be part of future stages of project, as outlined in "next steps".
Alternative option(s	١.		business case for the Mildenhall Hub
Aiternative option(s)·		looked at currently available options
			uding the maintaining the existing
			rice locations. Consultation on the
		Loca	al Plan will also examine site options.
			·
		Doir	ng nothing is not an option since some
			ne buildings are in need of replacement
		and	improvement.
Implications:			.,
Are there any financia	-	ons?	Yes ⊠ No □
If yes, please give deta	alls		An initial project development
			budget of £50,000 is sought to
			match-fund contributions of
			partners.
			Other development costs will be
			met from a grant from DCLG.
Are there any staffing implications?			
Are there any staffing	implicatioi	ns?	Yes □ No ⊠
If yes, please give deta	•	ns?	Yes □ No ⊠
	ails		Yes □ No ⊠ Yes □ No ⊠
If yes, please give deta	ails lications? I		
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If yes, please give deta Are there any ICT implyes, please give details Are there any legal and implications? If yes, please	ails lications? I s ad/or polic ease give / implicatio	c y	Yes □ No ⊠ • Yes ⊠ No □ • Compliance with planning policy requirements • Delivery of Strategic Plan and

Risk/opportunity assessment:		(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Safeguarding is not maintained for children and vulnerable adults	Low	Ensure that safeguarding remains the first design principle of any scheme and reflect feedback on concept designs	Low
Traffic issues are not mitigated	High	Reflect the findings of the traffic study and make suitable provision for any mitigation	Low
Planning requirements cannot be met	Medium	Carry out full pre-application assessments and consultation in accordance with defined planning processes and guidance. Include Hub in Local Plan consultation. Prepare and consult on Development Brief.	Low
The community does not feel engaged in the project/the final proposal does not reflect community input	Low	Continue to engage stakeholders in the project and consult as part of planning process.	Low
FHDC Councillors do not feel engaged in this Cabinet project	Low	Provide regular reports and briefings. Submit final proposal to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	
The project is unaffordable or undeliverable	High	Carry out due diligence of business case and prepare a full funding assessment and proposal before commencing any formal planning process (February 2016).	Low
The partnership is not strong/the Project is not well managed	Medium	Put in place strong governance and project management.	Low
The public estate in Mildenhall is not flexible enough to cope with the future needs of the area	High	Ensure through the Hub project and Local Plan consultation that suitable provision is made.	Low
The public estate is not managed efficiently for the taxpayer	High	Seek to deliver any investment in a coordinated manner, on as few sites as possible	Low
The operational and community benefits of an integrated public estate are lost	High	Ensure that any decisions are taken in partnership, under the Hub Project, and using the criteria of the One Public Estate (OPE) Programme	Low
The site(s) cannot be assembled	Medium	Hub to be provided on land in ownership of partners. Consult with DFE regarding educational land issues under OPE programme if required.	Low
Mildenhall swimming pool has to close as it is beyond economic repair	High	Ensure that a decision about the replacement of the pool is made in 2015 and can be delivered at an early stage of any Hub Project	Medium

Ward(s) affected:	All Wards, particularly those in and surrounding Mildenhall
Background papers: (all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)	 Mildenhall Hub Business Case, August 2014 CAB13/067, 5 February 2013 CAB13/092, 25 June 2013 CAB14/127, 7 January 2014 CAB14/156, 15 July 2014 CAB14/FH/012, 9 December 2014
Documents attached:	None

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 Background and Purpose of report

- 1.1.1 While it will have a bearing on the other partners, this report is written for Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and from the perspective of that organisation (and the community it serves). Other partners will still need to carry out their own due diligence.
- 1.1.2 The Mildenhall Hub is an innovative project to co-locate a range of public sector partners in Mildenhall, realising large savings, offering better services and community engagement and releasing surplus sites for regeneration. Ideally this would be achieved on one site with the fall-back of a split-site scheme. The scheme has received project funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and is an adopted project in Phase II of the Cabinet Office/Local Government Association's One Public Estate (OPE) Programme. Background information on the project can be found at www.mildenhallhub.info and is not repeated in this report.
- 1.1.3 The 2014 Hub business case prepared by Concertus showed that it is technically feasible to consult on a single-site Mildenhall Hub on the land already available to the public sector at Sheldrick Way. It also concluded that, regardless of the Hub project, Sheldrick Way is currently the best available location for a new leisure facility in the town to replace the Dome and Swimming Pool, as well as a logical site to look to meet all of the town's future educational requirements (11-18 and any new primary school). This could be achieved by an extension of the existing school site (Mildenhall College Academy's sixth form centre), with vehicular access from Sheldrick Way only (but pedestrian access to the town centre via Church Walk).
- 1.1.4 There are, however, two reasons why the partners are not yet in a position to definitely proceed with a design and planning application for a single-site Hub:
 - (1) There is a commitment to carry out public consultation on this and other Hub options as well as a requirement to ensure compliance with planning policy;
 - (2) A dependency of a single-site Hub is the ability to attract funding for replacing Mildenhall College Academy's existing buildings. A decision on the amount of funding (if any) which will be available from the Department for Education (DFE) is not expected until Autumn 2015.
- 1.1.5 While partners might not be able to reach this decision until early 2016, there is a need to keep up the momentum of the project, since it is implicit that, single or split-site Hub, the status quo for the public estate in Mildenhall is not sustainable, and change will be needed (some of which is operationally urgent e.g. the swimming pool, replacement of the Dome and improving school facilities). There are also inflationary pressures and time-limited opportunities to attract external funding. So, flexible preparatory work for the change must continue to minimise the risk of

delays later.

- 1.1.6 The purpose of this report is therefore to:
 - explain the assumptions made in assessing the business case;
 - establish the likely cost of the elements of the Hub that FHDC will need to build itself;
 - outline how this cost might be met by FHDC;
 - explain how FHDC will need to work with other partners to deliver the Hub;
 - outline the help that will be needed from central government; and
 - agree next steps and a provisional timetable for the project.

1.2 **Assumptions made for initial due diligence**

- 1.2.1 The Council cannot presume where future housing growth in and around Mildenhall will occur as this is a matter still to be examined under the Local Plan. However, it can make reasonable assumptions about future growth in Mildenhall contributing to the demand for and cost of the Mildenhall Hub. With the closure of RAF Mildenhall as a USAFE base in the early 2020s, this demand could increase further.
- 1.2.2 The Hub scenarios which have been examined to date are notional, based on work in the business case, and looked at from the FHDC perspective. Different and/or cheaper options may be available, and the phasing of development could have a large bearing on cost and deliverability.
- 1.2.3 Similarly, the next steps of the project would not preclude community ownership or different funding models for the Hub or multiple partner delivery, which can be considered later. What is being examined now is the worst-case financial scenario for FHDC.
- 1.2.4 It was assumed by Concertus that VAT will not be payable (as a council project), although this will need to be tested later in the project with specialist advice.
- 1.2.5 Concertus have also used standard national and regional benchmarks for calculating costs, based on the partners' space requirements, and made assumptions regarding inflation until the end of 2015. These assumptions are retained in this report (unless stated otherwise). There is also scope for FHDC and Suffolk County Council (SCC) to look at ways in which they can reduce some of the standard professional costs associated with the project.
- 1.2.6 One major caveat to put on the work at this stage is that, although the business case recognised the aspiration to achieve high environmental standards, the costs in it are not necessarily those associated with a high BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) rating. Aiming for such a grade could have a significant upward effect on the build costs.

1.3 <u>Likely cost of FHDC's own elements of the Hub</u>

1.3.1 The 2014 business case was intended to test the feasibility of co-locating the various public services, and to be aspirational and ambitious in order

to demonstrate the core concept of integrated services and vibrant and resilient communities. Cost estimates were based on the partners' maximum envisaged space and, since no detailed design work was done, no 'value engineering' was carried out on these costs.

- 1.3.2 The business case outlined total potential costs of over £50m for all elements of the Hub (at its maximum extent) but the majority of these costs related to MCA and other partners' requirements. The task for FHDC therefore has been to identify what the cost of its own elements of the Hub might be.
- 1.3.3 In assessing the business case, FHDC has made the following adjustments and assumptions to ensure that a prudent (or 'worst-case') financial scenario is modelled. These were:
 - (a) FHDC will provide all of the community or shared leisure facilities including those needed by MCA (as part of making a case to DFE that there is local investment in the educational elements of the Hub);
 - (b) FHDC will also take on responsibility for building all of the other shared facilities in the Hub. Exclusive facilities for the other partners are not included in this modelling (see section 1.5 below);
 - (c) The 'central heart' space of the Hub which houses all of these shared facilities would be almost halved in size from the aspirational business case concept design to ensure deliverability (but would still be over 1000m2);
 - (d) As well as its own, FHDC will re-provide all of the office accommodation occupied by the following of its existing tenants as at July 2015: the CAB; DWP; and Suffolk County Council;
 - (e) The 1000m2 enterprise space would require a separate business case and is therefore not included in the estimates;
 - (f) Based on the transport assessment carried out for the LDF in 2014, an allowance of £500,000 has been added to the business case estimates for highways improvements to town centre junctions;
 - (g) Land acquisition costs are excluded as the land is already in public ownership and this would be covered through separate negotiation with Suffolk County Council and Academy Transformation Trust.
- 1.3.4 With these adjustments, the target construction budget for FHDC's elements (at 2015 prices) of a single-site Hub would be as follows:

Leisure	4 court sports hall	£11m
facilities	25m six lane pool	
	Learner pool	
	50 station fitness suite	
	2 group exercise studios	
	2 therapy rooms	
	Associated wet & dry changing	
	1 full size artificial pitch	

Total		£16m
	Office space (see 1.3.3(d) above)	
	Facilities Management & ICT facilities	
	Multi-purpose room	
	Public toilets	
	Desks for short-term users	
	budget will be reduced if not)	
	Space for a public library (If required. Target	
Heart'	Café and Kitchens	
`Central	customer team, DWP and CAB)	
and	Large shared reception (including desks for	
facilities	5, 5	£5m
Office	Multi-purpose Council/Conference Chamber	Up to

1.3.5 With a split-site Hub, the cost of building a stand-alone leisure centre at Sheldrick Way may increase as there will not be the opportunity to share infrastructure (plant, reception, parking, etc). However the cost of remodelling College Heath Road to accommodate the other public services would be cheaper (under a refurbishment model). The net cost to FHDC would not be significantly different, as there would be no off-setting capital receipt for the College Heath Road site (as well as a loss of the wider financial benefits of co-locating at Sheldrick Way identified in the business case).

1.4 **Funding of FHDC's elements of the Hub**

1.4.1 Funding for the target budget will need to come from a variety of sources. In several instances, this will be an investment of money that will be spent in any event, but potentially far less efficiently if not through the Hub. When full Council is asked to sign off the project in late 2015 or early 2016 it will need these to be identified in some detail. At this stage, however, funding sources are simply summarised in outline to give Cabinet the confidence that the Council is justified to take the project to its next stages.

1.4.2 Already identified capital funding or receipts

Capital Programme for Swimming Pool	FHDC has already made provision to replace the existing swimming pool which can be used for the Hub	£3,000,000
Asset Management Plan (AMP) provision for College Heath Road offices in next 5 years	This is the cost of doing nothing insofar as this is what the Council has allowed to maintain its existing offices. This sum can be better invested in the Hub's newer facilities (smaller and cheaper to run)	£1,300,000
80% of AMP provision for swimming pool in next 5 years	Similarly, the Council had anticipated major maintenance costs for the swimming pool most of which will, hopefully, not now be needed	£200,000

Disposal of pool site	Concertus have estimated a capital receipt for the disposal of the swimming pool site	£100,000
Disposal of College Heath Road site	This sum is only available under the single-site Hub option. However, if a split-site Hub is pursued, other costs of the project could be reduced correspondingly.	£1,225,000
	Total	£5,825,000

1.4.3 Potential additional sources of capital funding

Developer contributions	Subject to the outcome of the LDF process, there is the potential to secure significant developer contributions from the future homes which will, themselves, necessitate the additional facilities the Hub will provide. In relation to council facilities this will apply to the leisure, library and community centre facilities, as well as health and education.
Capital receipt from library	If the library wishes to relocate to the Hub, there is the potential to work with the County Council to invest the
site	capital receipt from its vacated site.
Grants	There is the potential to apply for external grants for the Hub, in relation to not only associated infrastructure costs and renewable energy, but also for the leisure facilities. Sport England have been briefed on the scheme and Local Enterprise Partnerships will also be engaged.

1.4.4 Borrowing and supporting revenue savings

In accordance with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy any funding gap (likely to be several million pounds) for the target budget will need to be considered on the basis of prudential borrowing. To repay capital and interest, the Council would aim for a return on investment of approximately 10%. Sources of that return on investment will include:

Revenue budgets for leisure facilities	The current cost to the taxpayer of leisure facilities in Mildenhall is approximately £230,000 a year, reflecting the split sites, condition of the buildings and the customer offer. Independent analysis carried out for Abbeycroft suggests that, with the improved facilities mix proposed, the Hub should be capable, by conservative estimates, of reducing this subsidy by over 50% (including the full cost of FHDC's maintenance contributions). At the same time, users of the facilities should double.
Revenue budgets for office buildings	The Hub business case identified that, on property running costs alone, the project could save partners 50%. This analysis is borne out by using a benchmark of West Suffolk House (a modern office building

	completed in 2009 to the same space standards proposed for the Hub's office spaces). If the current West Suffolk House costs could be achieved for their staff based in the Hub, then the West Suffolk councils could expect to save over £150,000 a year.
Renewable energy	Investment in renewable energy (and energy and water reduction measures) will not only reduce the direct cost of running the Hub itself, but also has scope to generate income for the Hub project. The project has attracted government match-funding for a feasibility study.
Housing within the Hub	There is the potential to incorporate within the Hub site itself a small amount (perhaps 10-20 units) of complementary/ancillary housing, potentially specialist accommodation. This could be designed to generate a revenue stream to fund the Hub's shared facilities as well as offering the potential to improve service outcomes.
Rents and income	While not a commercial scheme in itself, there is still the potential for the Hub to generate income from hiring facilities or complementary tenants in its office or operational spaces (e.g. health providers). NB The café proposed for the Hub is intended as a training facility for MCA students, aimed mainly at Hub users, staff and councillors.
Sharing of overheads and further integration of services	Co-locating at the Hub will allow partners to share staff overheads for support services and facilities management e.g. a shared reception team.

1.5 Working with other partners to deliver the Hub

- 1.5.1 FHDC is not in a position to subsidise the facilities of other public bodies and therefore they will need to consider their own financial arrangements for the Hub project. Nonetheless, there is a strong inter-dependency between FHDC's own facilities and those of the other partners. Other partners' facilities are equally important to FHDC's in terms of making the Hub concept work, and their sharing of infrastructure on the site helps to deliver the anticipated savings in space, capital and revenue. In some cases, they will even be in the same buildings as FHDC's own facilities and the most practical model may be one in which FHDC provides them for rent. For this reason, it is important at an early stage to identify in principle how matters such as tenure and funding will be handled. This will need to be formalised in partnership agreements at the next stage of the project.
- 1.5.2 This issue is particularly pertinent to the due diligence of the following partners:
 - Suffolk County Council
 - · the National Health Service
 - Suffolk Constabulary
 - Suffolk Fire Service

- DWP
- CAB
- any pre-school or nursery provider.

NB: Special arrangements will be needed for the educational buildings, which are therefore not discussed in this report. Furthermore, for these purposes, the leisure facilities operated by Abbeycroft would be treated as if they were FHDC's (since FHDC will own them).

- 1.5.3 Any of the partners listed in 1.5.2 above could seek to build and own (or part-own) their accommodation in the Hub. However, the Project Board has identified the following potential model for scenarios where a partner wishes to rent accommodation instead:
 - (a) A landlord (FHDC or a special vehicle), to whom rents would be payable, would construct and own the facilities. It would also be responsible for insuring and maintaining the fabric of the buildings. Where it constructed specialist or large facilities for third parties which would be hard to re-let, it would need some certainty over the tenure arrangements.
 - (b) Running costs (utilities, cleaning, furniture, facilities management and grounds maintenance, parking, etc) would be shared by all occupiers (including the landlord) through a defined mechanism which was 'open-book' to ensure fairness and transparency.
 - (c) On top of this 'occupation charge', any tenants would also pay a rent to be determined by the landlord.
 - (d) Partners could however invest capital at the outset to meet the full or partial cost of their own facilities (exclusive or shared), in return for a discounting or waiving of their rent for a defined long-term period (pro-rata to their investment).
 - (e) Partners could alternatively allow the landlord to build their accommodation in return for a rental charge which also included the full cost of borrowing.
 - (f) The landlord could waive or subsidise a rent to a voluntary or community organisation to achieve a defined policy objective. This would allow affordable community use of the Hub.

1.6 **Working with central government**

- 1.6.1 A key next step for the project is to make the case to the Department for Education that it is a good investment for the taxpayer to move MCA from its Bury Road site to Sheldrick Way. An initial meeting, chaired by the Member of Parliament, was held between the relevant Hub partners, the DFE, Cabinet Office and Local Government Association (who manage the OPE Programme) before the recent elections, which highlighted the potential for the Hub to:
 - (a) improve the educational experience and outcomes;

- (b) deliver outstanding financial benefits for the taxpayer (compared to the status quo);
- (c) capitalise on a time-limited opportunity to make the change; and
- (d) pilot an innovative model of co-location and share the learning from it nationally.
- 1.6.2 Part of the case made to government then was the fact that FHDC's own investment in a single site Hub reduces the need for around £2m of capital spending on school facilities. This is due to the high number of shared facilities FHDC would provide (kitchens, sports hall, library, swimming pool, plant, etc).
- 1.6.3 MCA have been advised that they are eligible for Priority Schools Building Programme 2 (PSBP2) funding in relation to the worst condition buildings at Bury Road. The precise allocation of funding will be determined by DFE in the autumn, including whether this money can be used for a relocation rather than refurbishment project. When the availability (or not) of PSBP2 monies is known, the issue of educational funding will need to be considered again by the Hub partners since this will be a major determinant of how the Hub scheme is delivered.
- 1.6.4 To meet the OPE objectives, the re-use of existing public sector land is also an essential element of the Hub project. SCC and MCA would therefore need to seek the approval of the Secretary of State to release the Bury Road site from educational use once it could be vacated by the school.
- 1.6.5 The assistance of central government will also be sought in relation to advice on assembling funding and land, and engaging with the sponsor Whitehall departments for the various local partners.

1.7 **Next Steps**

- 1.7.1 Completion dates for the next steps for the project are provisionally as follows:
 - (a) **This meeting** Confirm FHDC's preferred option for consulting on the Hub
 - (b) **This meeting** Approve an initial project budget of £50,000 for FHDC (to be funded from the Delivering the Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy Reserve) so that the Council can contribute to the joint funding of various pieces of work and support.
 - (c) **By August/September 2015** Appoint an independent project manager, jointly funded by the partners, to plan and manage the next stages of the project
 - (d) **By August/September 2015** Update the MP and Cabinet Office/Local Government Association on the project under the auspices of the OPE Programme and seek further government assistance as required.
 - (e) **By January 2016** carry out public consultation for the Hub proposal, linked to the Local Development Framework (see (g) below).
 - (f) **By February 2016** prepare, consult upon and adopt a

- Development Brief for the preferred option based on public consultation on the LDF and specifically in relation to the Brief itself. The costs of the Brief will be funded from the existing DCLG grant funding available to the partners.
- (g) **By February 2016** Adopt a detailed proposal (funding, partnership agreement, land issues, timetable, etc) to allow detailed design work and planning processes to commence.
- (h) **By February 2016** Prepare specification for appointment of a design team (subject to (e)-(g) above)
- 1.7.2 As well as public consultation, there is a need to map out the internal approval processes required to deliver these next steps. In addition to any internal and external briefings which may be provided, a provisional timetable (subject to consultation outcomes) is as follows:

First round of LDF consultation closes	6 October 2015
Mildenhall Hub Project Board	w/c 12 October 2015
West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering	October (TBC)
Group considers draft	,
Development Brief	
Cabinet Considers approves draft	27 October 2015
Development Brief for consultation	
Consultation on draft Development Brief	9 November 2015 to 8 January 2016
Mildenhall Hub Project Board	December 2015 (TBC)
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14 January 2016
considers detailed project proposal	
(see 1.7.1(g) above)	
Mildenhall Hub Project Board	w/c 18 January 2016
West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering	January 2016 (TBC)
Group considers final Development	
Brief	
Cabinet considers detailed project	10 February 2016
proposal (see 1.7.1(g) above)	10.5.1
Cabinet considers final	10 February 2016
Development Brief	2451
Full Council considers final	24 February 2016
Development Brief	245
Full Council considers detailed	24 February 2016
project proposal	