

News Release

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Go ahead given for plans to rebuild community centre in St Albans



St Albans City & District Council

Plans to redevelop an ageing St Albans community centre into an outstanding eco-friendly facility have been given the go ahead.

Fleetville Community Centre, in Royal Road, was built in the 1940s as a “temporary” structure.

Although well maintained by the charitable trust that runs it, it is in a poor structural condition and is also expensive and inefficient to heat.

St Albans City and District Council, which owns the site, has been in talks with the trust and centre users about its redevelopment.

It will now initiate a discussion with the Charity Commission about the development proposals to obtain their approval.

The Council’s Cabinet – its decision-making body – agreed to move the project on to the next stage at its meeting yesterday. This will involve drawing up concept designs and costs.

The aim is to create a much-enhanced centre that can better meet the needs of local people and community activities. The new building will be larger, more energy-efficient and sustainable.

Among the proposed features are a main hall, three or more meeting rooms, a children’s suite, café, kitchen, toilets and an outdoor space.

Climate control assets would include solar panels, heat pumps, water harvesting devices, electric vehicle charging points and green walls or roof.

To finance the project, the Council will look to use income gained from developing a corner of the site or from development projects elsewhere in the District.

Councillor Robert Donald, Portfolio Holder for Commercial, Development and Wellbeing, said: “Fleetville Community Centre was originally built as a day nursery for women in the area who were working in nearby munitions factories in the Second World War.

“It has served local residents very well since then, catering for a huge number of different groups and activities.

“However, it is not only clear that a new modern building is needed, but that it must be considerably larger to cope with the increasing demand and diverse population in the area for the services on offer.

“We are determined to deliver a first-class and inclusive community centre that will meet the needs of local people of all ages, cultures and interests; a centre that will also be equipped with the best and most up to date climate change sustainability features such as solar panels and rainwater harvesting.

“The project will require an enabling development to provide finance towards the overall construction costs and we will now be looking at the best options for that.

“We will continue to consult with residents, user groups and the Fleetville Community Centre Trust which runs the facility as we regenerate the site to ensure the new facility meets the needs of the whole community in this area of St. Albans.

“We will particularly have to hold talks now with the Charity Commission as soon as possible to seek their agreement to our proposed redevelopment project and means of funding this.”

Trevor Parsons, Chair of the Fleetville Community Centre Trust, said: “We are delighted to partner the Council to replace the existing building which has done sterling service and is held in great affection by the community over nearly eighty years.”

Among the activities that normally take place at the centre are a children’s playgroup and kindergarten, Painting for Pleasure, National Autistic Society family support sessions, yoga, Weight Watchers and an accordion club. More information can be found here: www.fleetville.org.uk.

Councillor contact: Cllr Robert Donald, Portfolio Holder for Commercial, Development and Wellbeing: cldr.r.donald@stalbans.gov.uk, [01727 841647](tel:01727841647).

Contact for the media: John McJannet, Principal Communications Officer: [01727 819533](tel:01727819533), john.mcjannet@stalbans.gov.uk.