

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
2 DECEMBER 2024**

Officer: Helen Ball – Town Clerk

DITHERINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Purpose of Report

To make suitable arrangements for the continuation of 4 All Foundation to use the Ditherington Community Centre as a Community Hub

Background

The Ditherington Community Centre is one of two Community Centres owned by Shrewsbury Town Council, transferred to the Council at the time of local government reorganisation.

It originally had a local Management Committee but membership fell and the Town Clerk & RFO were required to maintain a management oversight.

Prior to COVID usage was sufficient to maintain the building, but post COVID many of those organisations either folded or went elsewhere resulting in the Town Council having to subsidise the running of the building.

The Council was approached by 4 All Foundation, the charitable arm of the Marches Academy Trust about the potential of using the building to develop a community hub. The Charity had done similar initiative in the other senior school catchments within the Academy. The Council entered into a Service Level Agreement for a 3 year period to determine the potential of such an arrangement.

Currently

The current SLA expired in October 2024 and 4 All Foundation are keen to enter into a longer agreement to wider develop the hub.

Since taking over the day to day running of the building:

- the main hall has been decorated and outdated curtains removed
- the smaller hall has had the large storage units removed and is a functioning room
- the meters have been boxed in
- the entrance hall re-painted
- the outside area tidied up with part being used as a community garden
- the outside area has been fenced off
- the installation of an Knife Amnesty Bin – 6 knives have been dropped off

There are a number of improvements required:

- New Kitchen – 4 All Foundation have received £7000 from the Rowlands Trust to be spent by 31 March 2025
- the outside play area levelled and resurfaced
- Front and kitchen windows replaced – Kitchen window has been ordered to allow for the Kitchen Units to be installed
- Outside painting
- Work on the guttering to reduce surface run-off
- Establishment of ramped access/egress from kitchen & hall
- Repairs to outside lean-to shed for storage

Discussion have taken place with 4 All Foundation about the potential of establishing a Community Interest Company which will be responsible for the building's long-term future including the payment of day-to day running costs that the Town Council is continuing to pay. Whilst community engagement is improving, this remains a long-term aspiration.

New SLA

4 All Foundation is requesting a 10 year term for a new SLA; this will allow continued investment of both equipment and staffing. There would however be a continued requirement for the Town Council to retain corporate landlord responsibilities as well as on-going repair and maintenance and utility costs.

Recommended that:

- (i) The Town Council reaffirms its support for 4 All Foundation developing Ditherington Community Centre as a Community Hub;**
- (ii) The Town Clerk agrees the term of a 10 year SLA with 4 All Foundation;**
- (iii) The proposed works as detailed above be added to the Capital Plan**