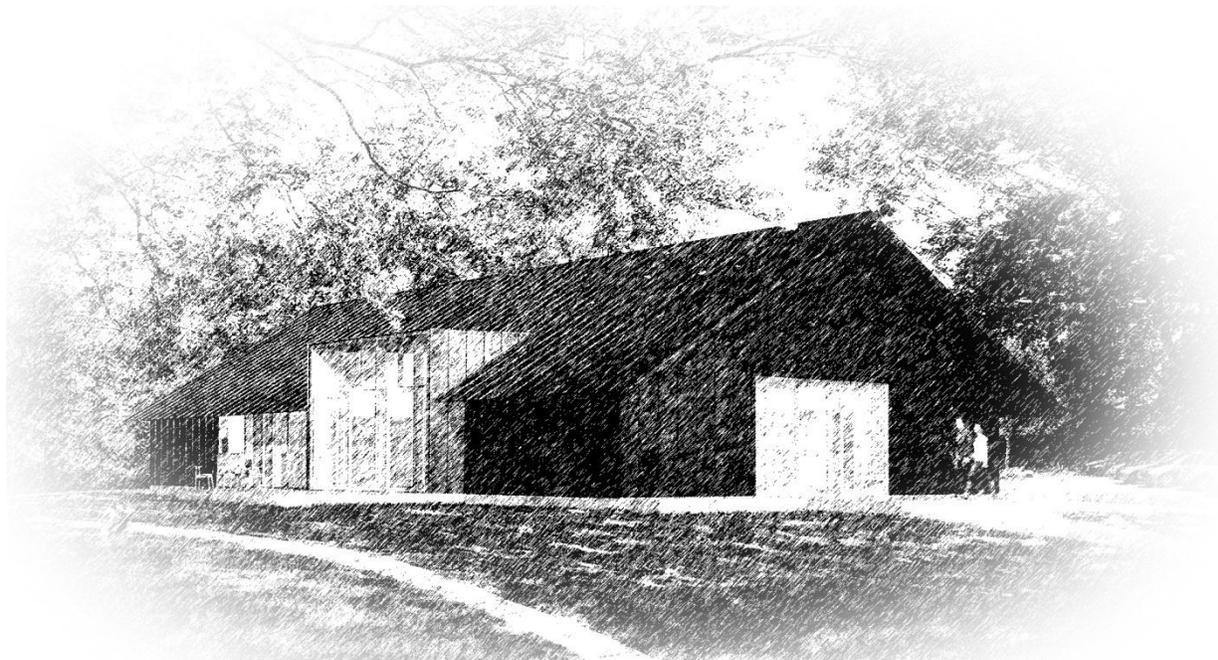


# ***St Michael's Community Rooms***

***The Business Case to replace the current St Michael's Rooms with a modern building to meet the needs of the Framlingham Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***





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# **New Community Rooms for Framlingham - St Michael's Rooms Redevelopment**

## **1 Purpose of this Business Case**

This document sets out the case for the investment of an estimated £840,000 to demolish the present St Michael's Rooms and to build a new purpose designed St Michael's Community Rooms for Framlingham on the same site together with the laying out of associated land for access, car parking and landscaping. It also sets out how the re-development of St Michael's Rooms into a new St Michael's Community Rooms would be accomplished and managed together with anticipated project timescales.

## **2 Overview and Background**

The current St Michael's Rooms building was constructed nearly 130 years ago and for most of those years it has served primarily as a community centre in the heart of Framlingham. It has been used almost exclusively by or on behalf of the Framlingham local community for a wide range of activities from mother and toddler groups, dancing classes and local activity groups to blood donor sessions and as a polling station. It has played a pivotal role in the community life of Framlingham and large proportion of the people who have lived in the town for a number of years will have directly benefitted from the facilities offered by the hall. A key attraction is that it is the only building that offers a relatively large size main hall in the town centre.

The hall is now currently used by 11 local groups and organisations, 4 of which hire it twice or more per week. However, as the area of the present hall that can be hired is limited to the whole main hall and, where needed, the kitchen, all the current hirers are those that need the space of the main hall.

The new Community Rooms will provide facilities not only for the range of social services and community uses that St Michael's Rooms currently offers but also a wider range of needs arising from the present and anticipated future housing development in Framlingham. The needs of smaller groups will be met by offering a meeting room with IT facilities and possibly sub-divisions of the main hall if this is feasible from a design and financial perspective.

It is an old building and, despite having had the benefit of a significant investment on improvements over the years, it is a building built to 130 year old standards. To secure the continued viability of this facility into the foreseeable future the only real option is for it to be rebuilt to modern standards, designed to meet the current needs of the local community. Representatives of Framlingham Town Council (FTC) and the St Michael's PCC (PCC) have been in discussion since March 2018 about realising this as a project. Funding would be provided by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund administered by East Suffolk Council, together with money provided by the PCC and local CIL funding held by FTC.

### **3 Project aims**

The aim of this project is to greatly improve the facilities offered to the Framlingham local community by re-developing the site on which the present St Michael's Rooms stands together with its associated land to provide a new building with facilities that are better suited for modern-day use by the community. The new St Michael's Community Rooms (the Rooms) will offer:

- A main hall of similar size to the existing St Michael's Rooms (SMR) for active classes or for other events when approximately 120 people can be seated theatre style or 90 to 100 people seated at tables;
- A kitchen of sufficient size to enable catering for this number of people (with on or off-site food preparation as appropriate);
- A meeting room accommodating up to 20 people seated either for meetings or presentations;
- Modern wheelchair accessible toilets, baby changing facilities;
- Appropriate provision of audio-visual and Information Technology capability;
- Sufficient storage to support the various uses of the new Rooms;
- A small administration office for the administrator for Rooms booking and records and also some general PCC business;
- A minimum of 22 parking spaces for users of the Rooms.

A key objective is to provide the opportunity for increased usage of the Rooms both to meet a wider range of current community needs than SMR presently does and also to meet the increased needs arising from the recent and future population growth of the town. The project and subsequent operation of the Rooms will seek to maximise the use of the Rooms for a comprehensive range of local community activities assisted by sensitive booking and competitive charging policies within the context of being financially sustainable. The project will have the added benefit of helping to enhance the town's economy by providing an event centre for local people.

### **4 The need for a new building**

The current SMR has fundamental problems relating to its structure that would be difficult and expensive to rectify in a way that would ensure its benefit to the community for the next 50 to 100 years. A recent structural survey identified a number as being in need of attention in the immediate and short term

A key issue is the progressive subsidence of parts of the building (such as the kitchen), that are giving rise to structural issues to both the exterior and interior. Another important issue is its poor thermal performance as, commensurate with its age, SMR is of twin leaf wooden construction with little or no thermal insulation. In addition, there are significant areas of defect, particularly rot in the timbers around the windows. Heating is essentially limited to the main hall and the toilets are somewhat primitive. None meet standards of accessibility. The cost of renovation to overcome all of this

would be considerable and there would still be significant recurring maintenance costs. It is also not the most attractive building externally in an historic area of Framlingham .

By contrast, a new building would meet current legislation in terms of thermal efficiency, accessibility, hygiene and be designed to meet the needs of the local community in the 21<sup>st</sup>, not the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It would be designed to have low maintenance costs, so helping to keep overall costs, and hence hire charges, to acceptable levels.

Building a new Community Rooms would allow its design to take into account the current needs of local organisations, for example by providing a meeting room which would accommodate up to 20 people for either meetings or presentations.

The new Community Rooms would also be designed to be an aesthetic asset to the local area. Situated in a Conservation Area between St Michael's church and the Castle, the site for the new Rooms is in the heritage centre of Framlingham. Depending on developments in the immediate vicinity, this could also become the cultural centre of Framlingham. The current hall contributes little in this regard.

In recent years the population of Framlingham has grown substantially and will have increased by 40% in the 10 years between 2011 and 2021. The population of the surrounding area has grown substantially also and further population increases beyond 2021 are inevitable. This will undoubtedly create significant additional need for facilities such as the new St Michael's Community Rooms in which to hold community activities.

## **5 Car parking**

Although the current hall has adequate car parking to the side and rear, it is mainly on a dirt and hardcore surface. Part of the proposed project to build a new Community Rooms is to provide better car parking facilities with a robust but porous surface that is fit-for-purpose together with a more durable, surfaced access way. There will be at least 22 car parking spaces close to the Rooms and this, together with car parking spaces on adjacent land under the control of the PCC, will be managed by or on behalf of the PCC.

## **6 Timescales**

It is expected the decision process that would confirm the availability of project funding would be complete by the end of Q3 2019. The process of finalising the architect's detailed design and obtaining planning permission is targeted for completion by the end of 2019. Depending on the availability of building contractors, work could commence as soon as possible thereafter, for completion within 12 months of commencement.

## **7 Financial viability**

Excluding major works that would be needed in the near future but including internal renovations and general maintenance, St Michael's Rooms is currently financially viable and has been for at least the last 35 years, despite the existence of a significant number of other halls in the town which are available for users to hire. Key reasons for its

viability are that it offers for hire a relatively large hall during daytime in a location central to the town where people that live in and around the town can attend events without the need to drive. Although local schools have large halls available for hire, these are more expensive, are not available during times when many of the organisations that hire St Michael's Rooms wish to use them and are not located in the town centre.

The new Community Rooms will increase the attraction to hirers as it will offer more facilities at an improved up-to-date level whilst retaining the same location advantages of the present St Michael's Rooms.

The ongoing increase in population of Framlingham and the surrounding area referred to earlier will create additional demand for facilities such as the new St Michael's Community Rooms in which to hold community activities.

The philosophy of promoting use of the new Rooms to local organisations will be by offering them advantageous rates and, in particular, to charitable organisations serving the local community. This will not prejudice the viability of the Rooms as this approach will be offset by higher charges to the commercial organisations that are frequently seeking to hire facilities such as those that the new Rooms will offer in the town centre.

## **8 Rooms Design and Costs**

Under the auspices of FTC and the PCC a working group of some members of FTC and PCC together with interested volunteers from the Framlingham community was established to progress the project and invite designs. Iterations in the design have resulted in design D3, which meets current thinking in relation to the facilities needed in the new Rooms. This is shown in Annex I. The architect has also formally confirmed that, as this design only differs in its internal layout from the previous design that was costed by the Quantity Surveyor, the cost of construction will be materially the same.

The Quantity Surveyor estimated the cost of construction of the new Rooms to be £754,000, which includes demolition of the present hall, external works and a 10% allowance for design and construction contingencies. An allowance of £46,000 has been made to cover planning, legal and other fees and £40,000 has been allowed for the purchase of tables, chairs and other equipment that needs to be provided for hirers. This brings the total cost, on which the CIL bid was based, to £840,000. The architect has confirmed that the project to construct the new Rooms with all required facilities can be completed for this sum of money.

## **9 Current Status and Funding**

In preliminary discussions, the East Suffolk Council (ESC) planning department has been encouraging with regard to the proposed design of the new Rooms which it was said was an honest approach that respects the character of the area. As the project lead, FTC sought and obtained an offer of funding from ESC for £700,000 to which FTC proposed to add £140,000 local CIL funding to make the total of £840,000, the

estimated total rebuild cost. In the CIL Application it was proposed that FTC would lead the project in partnership with the PCC and community volunteers. The complexity of the legal and financial processes that this entailed undermined the feasibility of this approach. Both FTC and the PCC now consider that, in the light of these incompatible legal requirements, the project would now best be led by the PCC. The PCC would take responsibility for securing the funding, construction of the new Rooms and the subsequent management and maintenance of the building and associated land, all in its ownership.

Discussions are proceeding between the FTC, the PCC and ESC to determine whether this can be accomplished. The target project cost is still the same but the PCC would now provide £70,000 (half the £140,000 that the town council was originally to provide from local CIL funding) and the PCC would apply to FTC for them to consider a contribution of matching the funds raised by the PCC to a maximum of £70,000 from local CIL funds. The contribution of £70,000 by the PCC is a tangible demonstration of its commitment to providing and maintaining an important facility to the community of Framlingham. Work to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between FTC and the PCC to formalise this arrangement is currently in progress. If ESC agree to the project leadership and the £700,000 CIL funding being transferred to the PCC, ESC and the PCC will enter into a Deed to formalise their mutual obligations in respect of this funding. The PCC and FTC will also enter into a separate agreement for the project funding from FTC.

## **10 Community Involvement**

The suitability of the design for hire by the local community will be assured by the PCC, having taken advice from current users, potential future users and other members of the local community as appropriate. Community participation in the ongoing management of the Community Rooms will be encouraged.

## **11 Management**

Under the proposed arrangement management divides into three distinct aspects, all ultimately the responsibility of the PCC:

1. Management of the work leading up to commencement of the project. This would be undertaken by the key nominated representatives from the PCC in consultation with FTC nominees. These key representatives have either a critical role in the PCC or have experience and skills directly relevant to the project;
2. Project Delivery. The day to day responsibility for this would be by the Architect or his agent, overseen by the PCC nominated representatives;
3. Ongoing management of the completed facility. This would be by a committee comprising PCC members with volunteers sought from the local community to ensure representation of the interests of users and the owners of the building.

## **12 Project Management**

From the point of agreement of funding for the project a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) will be carried out to identify all significant tasks in detail and resource. A schedule of anticipated expenditure will be produced to enable funding bodies to be informed and to enable cash flow to be effectively managed.

Funds for the project will be held in a separate account and used solely for the realization of the project. During the project, progress and cash flow will be regularly monitored by the project management team in conjunction with task owners.

## **13 Project Risks**

During the project a risk log will be kept and updated to ensure effective risk management.

# Annex I – New Community Rooms Design: Revision D3

