

Officer Update to Council: Victory Hall Hub, Parish Office and Primary Care Accommodation
Date: 17 September 2025

Purpose of report

This report provides an update on actions taken since the Council meeting on 28 August 2025 and seeks Council to note progress and give any further direction required.

Background and Council resolutions

On 28 August Council resolved that the existing Victory Hall main kitchen earmarked reserves remain protected for the separate refurbishment scheme and that this project proceeds immediately. Council reaffirmed minute reference FC063/25 and instructed the continuation of negotiations with Epping Forest District Council to secure either a financial contribution toward operational costs such as an hourly rental contribution or a time limited and clearly defined usage clause that is compatible with staff occupation and community or commercial hire, with any grant variation reflecting these protections.

Council delegated authority to the Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman and relevant committee chairs without conflicts, to engage on a without prejudice basis with stakeholders that may include Epping Forest District Council, the Primary Care Network and Integrated Care Board, the Limes Farm Community Group and Chigwell Library. The scope of the delegation includes preparing Heads of Terms for a peppercorn lease of the Parish office as a GP surgery subject to legal advice, commissioning the necessary surveys feasibility and cost planning and obtaining competitive quotations, preparing a risk register for Victory Hall the Hub and the proposed lease, and incurring professional and due diligence expenditure up to £7,500 excluding VAT from earmarked reserves, with any further spend returning to Council.

Engagement with Epping Forest District Council and UKSPF variation

In pursuance of the above, the Clerk has continued negotiations with Epping Forest District Council. On 4 September 2025 a formal request was submitted to vary the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant terms for the Victory Hall Hub to enable a survey first approach. The submission explained that there are no existing building plans, the construction quality is mixed, suspended ceilings may conceal unknown conditions and asbestos is known to be present and that a full intrusive building condition survey is therefore essential as the first step.

The proposal seeks a 50:50 split of survey costs between the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation and Chigwell Parish Council match funding. Using the survey outputs, the Council would appoint a professional team to develop layout options and prepare a compliant tender package with scope drawings specifications and pricing documents suited to the anticipated value of works. Works would prioritise securing the Community Pantry when not in use, providing secure storage for the Limes Farm Community Group, improving accessibility where feasible, creating modest Hub kitchen improvements to support users and maintaining a flexible zone that serves Warm Spaces and communal co working at other times. The submission requested that Epping Forest District Council allocates and commits the full £60,000 UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant to this project at Stage Gate A being the survey instruction stage, with authority to carry forward the committed funds beyond 31 March 2026 until completion.

The request also set out a single drawdown at Stage Gate A or, if preferred, a single advance to a Chigwell Parish Council client account ring fenced for eligible costs across surveys design tendering and works, supported by standard evidence including the signed grant variation survey instructions and purchase orders contracts regular cost reports and a final account. A staged assurance process was proposed comprising Gate A after surveys with reports outline options and an updated cost

plan, Gate B before tender issue with the draft tender pack, Gate C before award with tender analysis a recommended contractor final budget and programme and Gate D at practical completion with a completion report outcomes against objectives and the final account.

On 4 September 2025 Epping Forest District Council acknowledged the request, confirmed that the proposal would be passed to the relevant portfolio holders for discussion and indicated that a decision would be provided by 12 September. As at the date of this report no further response has been received.

Primary Care Network and Integrated Care Board engagement

Consultation with the Primary Care Network and the Integrated Care Board is ongoing to draft acceptable Heads of Terms for the proposed GP surgery premises at the current Parish office. Due to imminent changes within the local healthcare structure it is recommended that any pre-emptive correspondence and any draft Heads of Terms include a requirement that the office site will be known as the Parish Surgery and that provision is made for space as required for Chigwell residents. The Primary Care Network and the Integrated Care Board have expressed concerns about future building availability and capacity at a site currently housing a practice that serves some Chigwell residents and have asked that the Parish confirm they will look to assist wherever possible in addressing and mitigating any future premises issues should they arise.

Technical due diligence and preparatory actions

Building conditions at Victory Hall are such that a full intrusive building survey is required before any works can be planned. The suspended ceiling may conceal issues and asbestos is present. Competitive tendering is not possible until survey outputs are available and the scope is properly defined. Officers have begun scoping survey requirements and obtaining quotations within the authority granted. Drafting of a risk register covering Victory Hall, the Hub and the proposed lease has commenced. Space is being created within Victory Hall for Parish storage and staff are reviewing telecoms arrangements for the building. Officers are reviewing and updating costs for the separate main kitchen refurbishment in line with the Council decision that this scheme proceeds independently from earmarked reserves.

Financial and legal implications

Council authority exists to incur professional and due diligence expenditure up to £7,500 excluding VAT from earmarked reserves, with any further spend returning to Council. The proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund variation seeks commitment of £60,000 at Stage Gate A with the ability to carry forward funding beyond the current financial year and a survey cost split on a 50:50 basis. All procurement will follow Chigwell Parish Council standing orders and applicable public procurement rules. Council is reminded that no binding grant agreements or variations leases building contracts or purchase orders for works are to be executed without a further Council decision approving the final legal documents and the budget.

Risks and mitigations

Key risks include unknown building condition asbestos and concealed defects, uncertainty pending the Epping Forest District Council decision on the grant variation, and changes within the local healthcare landscape that may affect the configuration and timing of the Parish office conversion for primary care use. A survey first approach, ring fenced funding at defined stage gates and early agreement of clear Heads of Terms that safeguard access for Chigwell residents provide proportionate mitigation at this stage.

Recommendations for Council

Council is asked to note the contents of this report, to endorse the survey first delivery approach and the proposed stage gate assurance process with Epping Forest District Council, to endorse

inclusion in all pre contract correspondence and draft Heads of Terms that the office site will be known as the Parish Surgery and that space will be reserved as required for Chigwell residents and to note that the Victory Hall main kitchen refurbishment continues as a separate project with its earmarked reserves protected. Council is further asked to note that tenders for Hub works cannot be issued until survey outputs are received and the scope and budget are confirmed and that no binding agreements will be entered into without a further Council decision.