

1st October 2020

Ref: Funding of £600,000 at Risk for Planned Development of Youth Facilities at Galbally Community Centre

To Community of Galbally & Cappagh,

It is with deep regret that we have to pen this letter, but recent developments have unfortunately left us with no choice. A new capital development project was due to commence on site in early 2020 for purpose built youth facilities, to be located on the upper floor of Galbally Community Centre – an area used by Galbally Youth Club for games and meeting purposes, but which have been deemed unfit for purpose. This followed a successful funding bid by Galbally Youth & Community Association (GYCA) to Department of Education which secured £600,000 of grant aid. To the dismay of everyone involved, the current committee of Galbally Pearses GAC blocked this funding by writing to the Department of Education in February 2020. This come as a shock to us all, as the Club have been aware of this proposal for some time. This followed an earlier letter in June 2019 by an individual, reportedly acting as a Trustee of the Club, outlining his opposition to the funding of youth facilities for our community. The project is now at risk and the biggest single level of grant aid our community has secured will soon be lost, unless positive and decisive action is taken.

It is important to add some background and context. GYCA led on an application to the '*Youth Work Capital Scheme*' in September 2016. The scheme was only open to organisations that were registered with Education Authority and were delivering a minimum level of youth work. At this time, we engaged with representatives of Galbally Pearses GAC and other local organisations to identify how a potential scheme could benefit all user groups who engage young people in their work. Letters of support were provided by the Club and other organisations endorsing the proposal, and these were submitted as part of a comprehensive funding application.

It was not until June 2018 that our scheme was shortlisted, and at that stage architects were appointed by the funder to advance the project. Whilst there were ambitions for a larger scheme which would include changing facilities, the funder was opposed to this as it was deemed to be for sporting use and not in line with the purpose of the *Youth Work Capital Scheme*. They also had a limited pot of funding and we were forced to stay within the available budget. GYCA worked tirelessly to challenge this position but the Department would not meet our request.

However, we felt this huge investment signalled an incredible opportunity to develop improved facilities, not just for young people, but for all user groups in our community. Importantly, it was at no financial cost to our community as the grant aid would cover all professional fees and build costs (estimated to be £600,000). **A visual of the scheme is included in Appendix One.**

GYCA believed communication and transparency was key throughout this entire process and all reasonable steps were taken to ensure the Club was kept informed. There were regular updates to representatives of the Club throughout, both in writing and in person through countless meetings. Indeed, two senior representatives of the Club were also on the committee of GYCA throughout 2019 and in attendance at committee meetings. This project was a standing item on every agenda.

At this stage, we should have been availing of the new facilities as the tender process was complete in December 2019 and contractors were ready to commence the building works. Regrettably, due to the letter submitted by the Club, the project has been postponed and is now at significant risk of being withdrawn entirely due to strict timelines, and doubt cast by the Club over legal ownership of Galbally Community Centre.

We want to assure you, as members of this community, that we have tried our absolute best to navigate our way through this challenging situation. There have been countless letters exchanged between Club

and GYCA on this matter, numerous meetings with senior Club representatives and even an independent professional mediator engaged. Unfortunately, all of this has been to no avail in bringing about a resolution. This is wasted time, effort and financial resources which could be put to better use.

This is soul destroying for everyone involved in GYCA. We have worked tirelessly to develop community facilities which all our user groups can enjoy and benefit from. It is through working together in partnership with all local organisations that so much has been achieved. The representatives of GYCA are all committed members of our great Club and have nothing but admiration for what the Club brings to our community. GYCA is indeed made up of former players, committee members, sponsors and devoted supporters, all of whom want to see our Club and Community prosper together. We are all one.

We share in the disappointment and frustration of Galbally Pearses GAC that the funded development of new youth provision does not include changing facilities. We also acknowledge the list of accommodation requirements that the Club have (i.e. referees room, strength and conditioning facility etc). But this should not mean the Club block this investment to the detriment of our youth and community. It does not make sense to refuse this level of funding, which is a rare commodity in these uncertain times. We want to stress that this does not prevent further development taking place on this side of the building at any stage in the future. We have repeated this many times to the Club through correspondence and have consistently asked that we all work together to develop future facilities which benefit the Club, players and members. A Phase 2 Development can and should be taken forward upon completion of the new youth facilities, with GYCA and Club working together to deliver this vision which we all share and passionately believe in. **A visual (for illustration purposes only) has been included in Appendix Two to demonstrate what is possible if we work together for the benefit of everyone in our community.**

In summary there are two critical options available to us all as outlined below.

Option A

Galbally Pearses GAC withdraw their challenge. Phase 1 Development, funded by Department of Education, is built and available for use by our young people, the Club, other user groups and members of our community by end March 2021.

Representatives from both committees develop a co-working group focused on Phase 2 Development which will include facilities such as changing rooms, referee room and strength and conditioning facility etc. This ensures that the Club have a clear role in shaping future development, whilst complimenting the existing facilities.

GYCA and Galbally Pearses GAC develop a joint approach to drawing down public funding and undertake local fundraising to finance the development.

OR

Option B

Galbally Pearses GAC do not withdraw their challenge by end October 2020. This puts the proposed project at imminent risk, £600,000 of public funding is lost and no development takes place. It will almost certainly impact negatively on any future funding bids by any local organisation.

As a result, working relationships between key organisations are strained, which results in no future development opportunities on this side of the building – now or in the future. This would result in absolutely no benefits to young people, Galbally Pearses GAC, other user groups or any members of our community. A dispute over legal ownership will have to be settled in order to move forward which will prove divisive and costly.

This is an unprecedented amount of funding for any rural community. It will transform the current facilities and will be a huge benefit to our youth. The young people who will benefit from this investment may be members of Galbally Youth Club, but they will almost certainly be members of Galbally Pearses GAC. Young people involved with Paddington and CannyMan Community Arts will also benefit. It is simply another step to developing a Rural Centre of Excellence which boasts the finest community and sporting facilities on the island of Ireland – something the Club and GYCA have both worked hard to achieve.

It is critical that we work together in the true spirit of partnership and collaboration – an approach that has served us well in the past and has been the foundations of our success. Our community is always at its best when we are united. We cannot accomplish all that we need to do without working together.

We implore those within the Club and wider community to think about the consequences we may face if we fail to make the right choice as this critical juncture. We all need hope and positivity in these challenging times.

We realise this is an important issue which you may have views on or questions to ask. You can do this with discretion guaranteed by emailing galballycc@yahoo.com . Thank you for your time.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

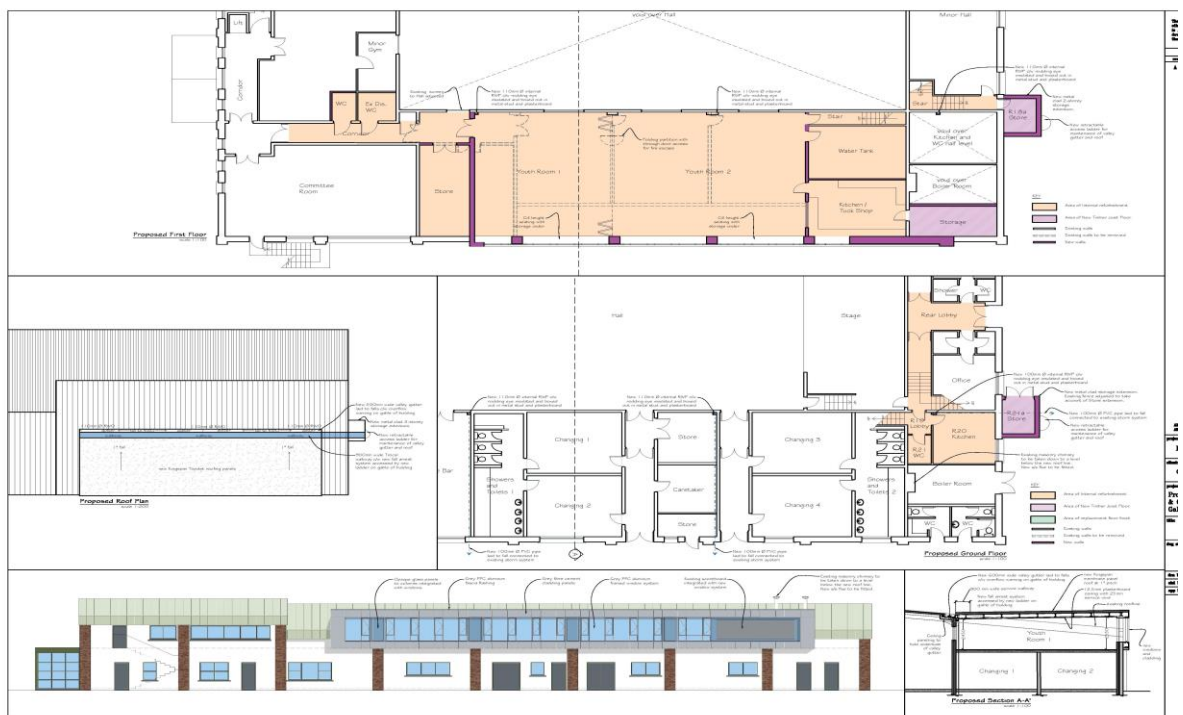
Yours Sincerely,

Committee of Galbally Youth & Community Association

Appendix One

Scheme Funded by Department of Education with £600,000 of Grant Aid, to be completed before March 2021.

(Includes raising of roof, installation of large glazed windows, internal refurbishment of first floor, refurbishment of rear kitchen, enhancement of rear entrance, new storage to rear of building)

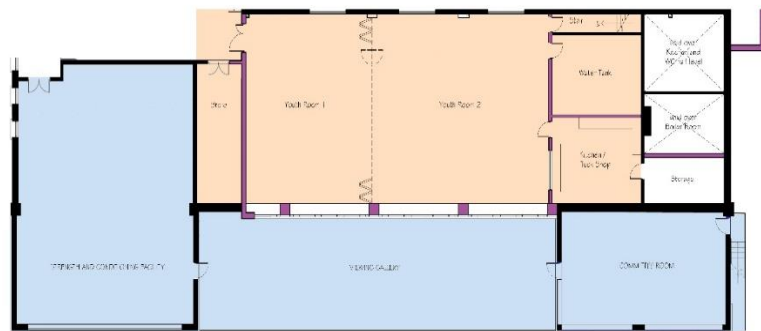


Appendix 2

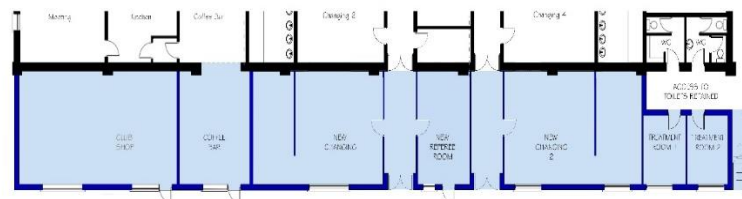
(Phase 2 Development which could include extending out on lower and upper sections of building, enlarged glazed frontage, new changing rooms (2 No), enlarged referee room, club shop, treatment rooms, strength and condition facility, committee room and viewing gallery area)

*Area shaded in yellow represents the new Youth Annexe which would be completed as Phase 1 and is 100% funded through grant aid. Area shaded in blue represents potential new Club facilities which can be developed at later stage as Phase 2 Development.

PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT (OPTION B)



FIRST FLOOR
PROPOSED PHASE 2 (OPTION B)



GROUND FLOOR
PROPOSED PHASE 2 (OPTION B)



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION
PROPOSED PHASE 2 (OPTION B)



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION
PROPOSED PHASE 2 (OPTION B)

Please note this is for illustration purposes only. Any design of Phase 2 Development will require co-operation between GYCA and Galbally Peares GAC to ensure that it meets the needs of all stakeholders. It does however show what is possible if we all work together.