HIGHCLIFFE & WALFORD PARISH COUNCIL **ITEM 18**

COUNCIL MEETING – 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Agenda Item: The Old School / Highcliffe Residents Association Community Centre – Next Steps

1. Purpose of Report

To update Council on progress regarding the proposed transfer of the Highcliffe Residents Association Community Centre (excluding the cottage) to Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council, and to present the recommendation arising from the Amenities Committee meeting held on 22 October 2025.

2. Background

The Council is exploring the transfer of the Community Centre at 254 Lymington Road into Parish Council ownership to secure the long-term sustainability of the building as a community asset. During preliminary discussions, it has been confirmed that **the cottage will be excluded** from any transfer, as the Council does not have the appropriate powers to act as a housing landlord.

A Public Works Loan is expected to be required to undertake significant repairs and improvements. The Clerk has advised that further financial due diligence, structural surveys, and costed quotations are required before a final Council decision can be made. The Clerk will also seek advice from DAPTC on the sequencing of loan application and property transfer documentation.

3. Consideration by Amenities Committee – 22 October 2025

The Committee considered the next steps, including outstanding due diligence requirements, loan process and legal transfer considerations.

Minute 197 – The Old School:
The Amenities Committee **RECOMMENDED** that **Council approve the transfer in principle** (Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19).

4. Revised Project Timetable

To allow for full due diligence and appropriate sequencing, the proposed programme has been adjusted:

Step	Activity	Estimated Timeline
1	Council agrees transfer **in principle**	**Nov 2025**
2	Schedule of works reports commissioned	Dec 2025 – Feb 2026

Step	Activity	Estimated Timeline
3	Detailed financial planning, including loan affordability	Jan – Mar 2026
4	Public and stakeholder consultation commences	Mar 2026
5	Council decision **on whether to proceed** following evidence review	**March 2026**
6	**Transfer becomes effective (subject to Decision No. 5)**	**1 April 2026**
7	Loan preparation, DAPTC review and PWLB submission	April – June 2026
8	Loan approval period	June – November 2026
9	Works procurement and commencement	Winter 2026 / Spring 2027

5. Revised Recommendation to Council

Council is asked to:

1. **Approve the transfer of the Community Centre (excluding the cottage) in principle**, **effective from 1 April 2026**, subject to completion of due diligence, full financial evaluation, and public consultation.
2. **Authorise the Clerk** to:
    - Obtain quotations and professional reports needed to confirm the cost and scope of works;
    - Undertake financial planning and begin preparation of the Public Works Loan documentation;
    - Seek advice from DAPTC on procedural and legal sequencing;
    - Report back to Council in **March 2026** with full findings for a final decision on whether to proceed.

6. Implications

A further detailed report will be required prior to any binding financial or legal commitment. Public transparency and consultation will be central to decision-making, and no irreversible action will be taken before Council considers that final report.