Appendix A PROCUREMENT AND FUNDING PROPOSAL

Sheepcot Recreation Ground Pavilion Refurbishment

Prepared for Full Council

Project	Refurbishment of pavilion at Sheepcot Recreation Ground
Estimated cost	£350,000 to £480,000 inclusive of VAT, which is expected to be recoverable
Net project cost	£400,000 (after VAT recovery)
Planning	Planning permission granted (P25/S4010/FUL)
Prepared by	Deputy Clerk and Cllr B Urbick (on behalf of the Sheepcot Committee)
Date	19 April 2026
Extraordinary Meeting	24 April 2026

1. Purpose of this proposal

This document sets out the proposed two-stage procurement approach for the refurbishment of the pavilion at Sheepcot Recreation Ground. It is presented to the full Council for consideration and is intended to support the council in delivering the project and meeting its obligations under its Financial Regulations, and under the Procurement Act 2023.

The note also includes the draft Stage One Selection Questionnaire (Appendix A), the shortlisting criteria including pass/fail thresholds and scored criteria (Appendix B), the project information pack to be issued to applicants (Appendix C), and the funding plan and grant application strategy (Appendix D). All four are presented for Council approval before any further action is taken.

Council is asked to note that the role of the Finance Committee in this project is defined by Financial Regulation 5.19, which requires the Finance Committee to be satisfied that sufficient funds are available before any contract is entered into. That gate applies at the point of contract award, not at the point of approving the procurement approach or the funding strategy. Both of those are matters for full Council. The Finance Committee's Terms of Reference confirm at clause 4k that all its powers shall be exercised in accordance with any Standing Orders, policy adopted or directions given by the Council.

2. Background and context

Planning permission has been granted for the refurbishment of the pavilion at Sheepcot Recreation Ground (reference P25/S4010/FUL). The project is expected to cost between £350,000 and £480,000 inclusive of VAT, which is expected to be recoverable as the council is VAT registered.

The council holds £92,322 in an earmarked reserve designated for this project. Grant applications are being prepared to bridge the funding gap, including an application to the SODC Capital Grant scheme and a number of other funding sources. The local football clubs have indicated a willingness to raise funds, with a target of £40,000 as a community contribution. In addition, the council is in the process of selling the Old Jubilee Fire Station (OJFS), its former offices, to the local medical practice for £175,000, with contracts expected to exchange within the next few weeks. It is proposed that the council allocates £75,000 of the OJFS sale proceeds to this project, being a direct application of capital receipts to capital expenditure in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.

The council is required under Financial Regulation 5.7 to comply with publication requirements for contracts above £30,000 including VAT, and under Financial Regulation 5.6 to seek formal tenders for contracts above £60,000 including VAT. At the anticipated contract value, both requirements apply. Financial Regulation 5.19 provides that no contract shall be entered into unless the Finance Committee is satisfied that the necessary funds are available.

3. Why a two-stage process?

A project of this scale and complexity is well suited to a two-stage procurement approach. The reasons are as follows.

- Volume management. A single-stage open tender at this value is likely to attract a large number of expressions of interest, many of which may be from contractors without the relevant experience or capacity. A two-stage process allows the council to shortlist to a manageable number of genuinely capable contractors before issuing the full tender documents.
- Quality of response. Contractors who pass the stage one assessment are more likely to submit well-considered, competitive tenders at stage two. This improves the quality of the evaluation process and reduces the risk of selecting a contractor who cannot deliver.
- Grant evidence. Many grant funders, including the SODC Capital Grant scheme, require evidence of costs before an application can progress. Stage one responses will include details of comparable projects with contract values, which, alongside a covering letter from the Clerking team confirming the procurement process, will provide the cost evidence needed to support grant applications. If this approach is approved, the Clerking team will confirm directly with the relevant grants officer that it satisfies the evidence requirement before any application is submitted.
- Compliance. The two-stage approach is fully consistent with the council's Financial Regulations and the Procurement Act 2023. It does not remove or reduce any transparency obligations.

4. The proposed two-stage process

Stage One: Selection Questionnaire

The Clerking team will publish a Selection Questionnaire (SQ) on Contracts Finder and notify interested contractors. The SQ is a capability and suitability assessment, not a pricing exercise. Its purpose is to establish whether a contractor has the financial standing, relevant experience, insurance, and capacity to deliver a project of this type and value by the target completion date of September 2027.

Alongside the SQ, applicants will be provided with a project information pack (Appendix C) containing the planning application, the planning decision letter, and the documents submitted with the planning application. This gives contractors sufficient context to assess the scope at stage one without requiring a full specification to be prepared in advance.

While the Selection Questionnaire will be published on Contracts Finder and is open to all contractors, the Clerking team will also proactively notify known local and regional contractors of the opportunity. This will be done by directing them to the public Contracts Finder notice and does not confer any advantage over other applicants. All contractors, whether notified directly or self-identifying through Contracts Finder, will be assessed against the same criteria on the same terms. Submissions should be made by email to a dedicated email address (sheepcotpavilion@goringparishcouncil.gov.uk – to be set up after approval of this proposal) by the deadline stated in the covering letter. All submissions will be held unopened until the deadline, in accordance with Appendix 1 of the Financial Regulations.

Responses will be assessed in two stages. First, against the pass/fail criteria in Appendix B: the Clerking team will apply the pass/fail criteria and any applicant who does not meet a pass/fail threshold will not proceed regardless of their performance elsewhere. Second, qualifying applicants will be ranked using the scored criteria in Appendix B. Scoring will be carried out independently by the Clerking team and at least three members of the Sheepcot Committee, with all four councillor members invited to participate. Each assessor will score independently without consulting others. The final ranking will be based on the average of all scores received. All individual scores will be recorded alongside the average, and where any individual score differs from the panel average by more than 20 points out of 70, the Clerking team will note this and the reasons will be discussed before the shortlist is finalised. The aim is to produce a shortlist of between five and eight contractors to be invited to tender at stage two. Both the pass/fail criteria and the scoring framework are part of this approval.

Stage Two: Invitation to Tender

Shortlisted contractors will be issued with a full Invitation to Tender (ITT) including a schedule of works and performance specification. The appointed contractor will be invited to finalise the construction drawings in collaboration with the council. This approach is well suited to a refurbishment project of this type: it allows the contractor to apply their practical knowledge to the detail design, reduces the time and cost of preparing a full specification in advance, and minimises the risk of costly variations once works begin. Any contractor-designed elements must comply with the planning permission as granted.

The Sheepcot Committee had previously considered engaging an independent consultant to prepare a full specification prior to tender. Having reviewed this approach in the context of the project scale and the contractor design model, it is recommended that this is not pursued. For a refurbishment project of this value, a well-drawn schedule of works and performance specification, developed iteratively with the appointed contractor, will deliver better outcomes at lower cost than a separately commissioned specification. Independent consultants add most value on projects where the client needs to fix every detail before going to market, or where the design is highly technical. Neither applies here. The cost and timeline saving is also meaningful and the risk of specification errors or costly variations, which often arise when a consultant who will not deliver the works prepares the detail, is reduced. The appointed contractor will be held to the planning permission as granted and to any conditions attached to it.

Tenders will be submitted and opened in accordance with Appendix 1 of the Financial Regulations. They will be evaluated against pre-agreed criteria covering price, relevant experience, proposed methodology, programme, and quality of submission. The council is not obliged to accept the lowest tender (Financial Regulation 5.14).

A recommendation report will be prepared by the Clerking team in consultation with the Sheepcot Committee members who participated in the evaluation. The report will be signed off by at least three Sheepcot Committee councillors before it is presented to full council. This ensures that the recommendation reflects the collective judgement of those who have assessed the tenders, rather than a single officer view.

Before evaluation begins, all participating assessors must declare any personal, business, or financial interest in any organisation that has submitted a tender, in accordance with the council's Code of Conduct. Any assessor with a registrable interest in a tendering contractor must withdraw from the evaluation of that contractor's submission and from any sign-off involving that contractor. The Clerking team will record all declarations made and retain them as part of the procurement audit trail. If declarations reduce the available panel below three councillors for any individual tender, the Clerking team will report this to the Chair of the Sheepcot Committee before proceeding, so that a decision can be made on whether to co-opt an additional assessor or manage the conflict in another way.

The report will be brought to full council for the award decision, along with a confirmed or near-confirmed funding position. No contract will be entered into until the Finance Committee is satisfied that sufficient funds are available (Financial Regulation 5.19).

Indicative timeline

The indicative timeline is as follows.

Stage	Indicative timing
Council approves procurement approach, SQ, shortlisting criteria, project information pack, and funding plan	Extraordinary meeting 24 April 2026
SQ and project information pack published on Contracts Finder	Within one week of approval
SQ response deadline	Four weeks from publication
Shortlisting completed	Two weeks after deadline
Grant funding conditionally approved	Target: October to December 2026
ITT issued to shortlisted contractors	One week after conditional grant approval
Tender submission deadline	Four to six weeks from ITT issue
Evaluation and recommendation report prepared	Two to three weeks after deadline
Award decision by full council	Next available meeting after grant funding officially secured
Construction begins	Target: early spring 2027
Target completion	September 2027

5. Funding position and grant applications

The council's current confirmed funding from its earmarked reserve is £92,322. The September 2027 completion target is not arbitrary. Goring United FC has recently earned promotion to a higher league, but the terms of that promotion require the club to demonstrate that suitable facilities are in place. If the pavilion is not completed to the required standard by September 2027, the club faces demotion. Beyond the immediate impact on the club, the council cannot qualify for the Football Foundation AGP grant, estimated at over £1 million, until the pavilion meets the required facility standards. The pavilion refurbishment is therefore a gateway project: completing it on time protects the club's league status, supports the Goring Robins' continued growth across 24 junior teams, and unlocks a substantially larger subsequent investment in the site. Delay is not a neutral option.

Grant applications will be prepared concurrently with the procurement process. The full funding plan and grant application strategy is set out in Appendix D. In summary, the council has identified total funding of £457,322 against a net project cost of £400,000, representing a surplus of £57,322 before any contingency. This reflects the confirmed OJFS capital receipt of £75,000, the Sheepcot EMR, grant applications to be actioned, and community fundraising. The funding position is strong. The procurement and grant timelines are broadly aligned, and a confirmed or near-confirmed funding picture is anticipated around the time a preferred contractor is identified, with a target of October to December 2026.

The following should be noted.

- Grant applications require council authority before submission. It is recommended to delegate authority to the Clerking team supported by Cllr B Urbick. Final acceptance of any grant offer will be by the full council.
- The SODC Capital Grant scheme and others require evidence of costs. Stage one responses, together with a covering letter from the Clerking team confirming the procurement process, will be used to satisfy this requirement.
- Community fundraising of up to £40,000 is being pursued by local football clubs. This is noted as a targeted contribution but is not treated as confirmed funding for the purposes of Financial Regulation 5.19.
- No contract will be entered into until the Finance Committee is satisfied that sufficient funding is in place. The final contract award decision will be made by the full council.

6. Recommendations

The Council is asked to resolve as follows.

1. To APPROVE the two-stage procurement approach for the Sheepcot Pavilion refurbishment project as set out in this briefing note.
2. To APPROVE the Stage One Selection Questionnaire as set out in Appendix A, the shortlisting criteria (pass/fail and scored) as set out in Appendix B, and the project information pack as set out in Appendix C, and to authorise the Clerking team to publish these on Contracts Finder.
3. To APPROVE the funding plan and grant application strategy as set out in Appendix D, and to authorise the Clerking team and Cllr Urbick as nominated councillor to prepare and submit grant applications to the sources identified and any other applicable funders identified in the course of the project, and to report outcomes back to council. Final acceptance of any grant offer will be by the full council.
4. To APPROVE the allocation of £75,000 from the proceeds of the sale of the Old Jubilee Fire Station (OJFS) to the Sheepcot Pavilion refurbishment project, as a direct application of capital receipts to capital expenditure, subject to the sale completing satisfactorily.
5. To NOTE that no contract will be entered into until the Finance Committee is satisfied that sufficient funding is in place, in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.19.
6. To NOTE that the final specification, evaluation criteria, and contract award will be subject to further full Council approval before any contract is entered into.

AI assistance disclosure: *This document was prepared with the assistance of Claude, an AI assistant developed by Anthropic, used via claude.ai. The AI was used to draft, structure, and refine sections of this briefing note and the appendices, to research grant eligibility and procurement requirements, and to produce working versions of the funding plan and application strategy. All content has been reviewed and amended by the named authors and is presented to council for approval. The accuracy of procurement and financial information has been checked against the council's own Financial Regulations, the Procurement Act 2023, and the SODC Capital Grant scheme documentation. In accordance with the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard, this disclosure is included as required by the council's IT Policy (section 6.4).*
