

Cabinet Meeting Resolution

Executive Forward Plan Reference	E2458
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Options for the Future Use of Victoria Hall Radstock

Date of Meeting	14-Nov-12
The Issue	<i>Further report to provide detailed information on the options for the future use of the building, including ongoing revenue implications.</i>
The decision	<p>(1) To NOTE the outcomes of the feasibility study;</p> <p>(2) To AGREE that Work is progressed on determining the viability of implementing a scheme for the relocation of the library, creation of community facilities with meeting room and exhibition space, accessed by a new lift;</p> <p>(3) To AUTHORISE the Chief Property Officer to finalise the preferred scheme for the development of Victoria Hall in consultation with Cabinet Member for Community Resources and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business plan being completed for the facility, which includes the library relocation, and which will be subject to the approval of the Section 151 Officer; • The sources of additional revenue liability resulting from any additional running costs being identified. Any additional revenue costs will represent a funding pressure for 2013/14 and prudent provision is being included in the Resources MTRSP; • Sources of external capital funding, including local grants, being fully explored. <p>(4) To AUTHORISE the Chief Property Officer to dispose of the existing library;</p> <p>(5) To AUTHORISE the Chief Property Officer to maximise the financial returns from the caretaker's house to facilitate the development of Victoria Hall; and</p> <p>(6) Subject to the above, to ALLOCATE £160,000 from the Radstock Regeneration Budget and a maximum of £715,000 from the Capital Contingency, to facilitate the development; further subject to the Capital Contingency being replenished to an appropriate level as part of the 2013/2014 Budget.</p>
Rationale for decision	<p>The preferred scheme delivers as far as is practicable the preferred outcomes of the consultation process reported to Cabinet on 11 July. Whilst the steer from the community is clear, the case for a sustainable level of use of the facilities is not yet made and it is, therefore, recommended that a full business case is put in place that will examine the potential levels of revenue from this source. If no other funding sources can be identified this will be an ongoing revenue pressure. The incorporation of the library in to the building will result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to redefine the provision of the Library Service; • Scope for shared space utilisation;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of the library site for sale. <p>The preferred scheme will deliver maximum community benefit from a building that has inherent limitations in accommodating a wider range of uses within the existing structure. In particular, none of the models for retaining snooker within the building were satisfactory, as they placed unacceptable limitations on other uses.</p> <p>By engaging with the community on this project the Council is demonstrating its commitment to listen to the views of local people, facilitate greater community involvement and to put them at the heart of what we do.</p>
<p>Other options considered</p>	<p>In line with the outcomes of the consultation exercise and in line with the resolution of July cabinet a number of alternative approaches were investigated and are summarised below. Each of the options for delivering community facilities is predicated on the scheme being delivered by the Council.</p> <p>Sell the Building: The proposed strategy has been developed as a result of the public consultation exercise undertaken in May/June 2012 and a direct outcome of this is to return the building to community use rather than its sale. The analysis of the options from the consultation exercise indicated a wish for a broad picture of uses to be established that, coupled with linked developments within the town, point at a use based on community facilities, meeting space and exhibition space. The option to sell the building was not, therefore, progressed as an option by the Cabinet meeting of 11 July.</p> <p>Business Hub: Alternative proposals for the use of the building as a business hub were also considered by the Cabinet. This was not a preferred option as it did not emerge strongly from the public consultation. The Radstock area has a strong concentration on manufacturing and building related industries and the local need in terms of economic development is, therefore, seen as best being delivered through small start-up units to serve this market. Victoria Hall does not lend itself to this use and the kind of business facilities that it might provide are not seen as being on a scale that is sustainable, nor is there a proven market for this type of facility in Radstock.</p> <p>Upgrade of facilities to modern equivalents: This option would see little change to the structure or use of the building so that snooker and community space are maintained but the library is not relocated to the hall. This would address immediate DDA issues to minimum requirements and, for example, completely rewire the building, provide new boilers to the existing central heating system, and install a lift. Users would see little change to the building but it might be expected to have systems that will be operational for the short to medium term. Estimates of the costs of this option are £ 580,000. In this option, the caretaker's house could be surplus to requirements and disposed of separately to reduce the overall cost. The value of the caretaker's house plus garden in its current poor state of repair is estimated to be not more than £95,000. Reason for rejection. This is not seen as a viable proposal to deliver a community facility that</p>

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will have a long term sustainable future. The running costs of this option would continue to be high and flexibility/comfort and use would be compromised. The budget associated with the library would not transfer to assist with running costs.

Refurbishment of premises to maximise existing use:

In this option the building would be refurbished to a good standard that reduced running costs and gave the building a good long-term lifespan for community use. The library would not be accommodated in this model. It would essentially secure the existing uses and would future-proof the building. The cost of this option is estimated at £ 725,000. As above, the caretaker's house could be released to offset costs.

Reason for rejection

Whilst this would facilitate the long term future of the structure of the building and its existing uses it does not provide the benefits that a shared use with the library is seen as bringing. Not least, the revenue position is likely to be difficult without the library budget.

Scheme to accommodate Library, Community and Snooker:

This scheme sought to accommodate the full range of aspirations expressed in the public consultation exercise of community, library and snooker use. Provision for a lift is made within costings but the location of a lift will be difficult when accommodating all uses on-site.

Ground floor: library; associated office and staff facilities in the house; WC's including disabled

First floor: function hall/community space; kitchen; snooker table; pool table and storage area in house

The capital costs for undertaking this conversion are estimated at £ 1.1 million. The current library building and site could be released for sale either as existing or a potential redevelopment site. This could provide a potential capital receipt of circa £125,000. The caretaker's house forms part of the scheme and, therefore, no contribution to scheme costs would be available from its sale.

Reasons for rejection

The snooker/pool facilities impinged on the area of the main hall and strengthening of upper floors would be required. The alternative being pool/snooker facilities that do not meet needs for circulation space and a loss of meeting/changing facilities. The attempt to facilitate all uses, therefore, increased costs substantially whilst reducing the functionality, especially of the community use element.

Declarations of Interest

None

The Decision is subject to Call-In within 5 working days of publication of the decision