

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Patrick Anketell-Jones, Cabinet Member for Economic Development Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Resources	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 7th May 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E 2846
TITLE:	Abbey Chambers	
WARD:	Abbey Ward	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Please list all the appendices here, clearly indicating any which are exempt and the reasons for exemption		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 It is proposed to grant a lease to Bath Abbey for the basement of Abbey Chambers and the vaults adjacent to the Abbey currently leased from the Council to the Abbey for use as a heritage centre, for 150 years at a market rent, but abated to nil.
- 1.2 The lease will be tied to a Building Agreement that will require the Abbey to carry out the proposed works in accordance with agreed plans set out in 2.3.
- 1.3 This will require cabinet approval to authorise the Chief Property Officer to deal with the disposal of the asset because there are no current delegations or resolutions to allow such a transfer to take place at less than best consideration; best consideration being based on market values.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet Members agree that:
- 2.2 The Chief Property Officer be authorised to enter into an agreement for lease with Bath Abbey on the basement of Abbey Chambers.
- 2.3 The lease reserves a market rent which is abated to nil, subject to the tenant satisfying the landlord of the following:

- (1) The Tenant shall ensure that reasonable toilet facilities in the Property (reasonably agreed with the Landlord) are available free to the public at all times that the Bath Abbey is open to the public which will be not be less (on average) than six days a week. The only exception being when the conducting of church services in the Bath Abbey precludes the access of the general public to the toilets. The Tenant shall provide signage to the toilets as reasonably approved by the Landlord.
- (2) The Tenant shall ensure that it operates a museum in the Property and / or Bath Abbey that provides a good general history of Bath in the medieval period (not just Abbey history) and that the museum is available free to the public at all times that the Bath Abbey is open to the public which will be not be less (on average) than six days a week. The only exception being when the conducting of church services in the Bath Abbey precludes the access of the general public to the museum. The museum must be to the reasonable satisfaction (in terms of size and content) of the Landlord's nominated museum officer. The Tenant shall provide external (if possible) and internal signage to the museum as reasonably approved by the Landlord and publicise the museum, particularly emphasising that access is free.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The potential market value of the basement has been calculated to be £16,500 pa exclusive of rates VAT, service charges (if applicable) etc.
- 3.2 The value of a two cubicle public toilet, one fully disability compliant, 20p entry charge, hand wash/dry, baby-change, tiled floors and walls, remote monitoring and variable timed access, and including utilities, consumables, cleaning, servicing and maintenance, 364 days a year net (of income) costs approximately £14,000 per year. Assuming the Abbey will be able to provide the service 75% of the time this equates to cost avoidance to the Council of £10,500 pa.
- 3.3 Based on the admissions charge for a small specialist museum and assuming circa 100,000 visitors a year and 6% of turnover for rent, alongside restricted opening times and size limitations, it would be reasonable to calculate equivalent cost avoidance to the Council of £6,000 pa.
- 3.4 Together these offer benefits to the Council and residents at least equivalent to the market value of the lease. These benefits are not part of an approved Council Strategy or budget and therefore represent growth avoidance against new/extended service provision, rather than savings against an approved budget.
- 3.5 In the event that the Abbey cease to provide either or both of the toilets and the museum functions the discount to the rent would cease, at which point additional income would be generated that, if required, could be used to re-site those facilities.
- 3.6 Currently the basement of Abbey Chambers is occupied by organisations funded by the Council and the Council therefore receives no net income from the basement.
- 3.7 There would therefore be no net change, either cost or income, to the financial position of the Council.
- 3.8 The Abbey will be responsible for all public liability and other insurances relating to the provision of the services set out in 2.3

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 The Council is required to demonstrate that it has received best consideration for any disposal.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 Bath Abbey is undertaking a major redevelopment programme called the Footprint project. The project, which has significant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is a transformative programme of capital works, interpretation, collections care and sustainable energy, provoked by the urgent need to repair and renew its collapsing historic floor.

5.2 The project has a series of aims, which will enhance the Abbey as a place of worship for Bath's residents and a high quality visitor attraction. They key elements of the scheme are:

- Stabilising the floor foundation, renewing its surface, and using the unique hot springs as a source of energy
- Fulfilling the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality
- Recording and interpreting the long history of the Abbey site and this iconic church for millions of visitors
- Becoming a People and Place Fully Alive: worship, hospitality and engagement

5.3 The project is planned to provide:

- Repaired Abbey floor and environmentally friendly heating and lighting
- Flexible furniture in the Abbey and other spaces
- Cloister style gathering and retail space
- Renewed main entrance to the Abbey
- Rehearsal spaces for choirs & the schools' singing programme
- Interpretation & learning facilities
- Modern kitchens and catering facilities
- Meeting rooms, new vestries and an administrative hub
- Toilets, cloakrooms and baby changing facilities
- Storage spaces
- Landscaped public space

5.4 The basement of Abbey Chambers is a key requirement for the successful delivery of the Footprint project as it provides the space for the interpretation and learning facilities.

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 The Bath Abbey Footprint project will have a significant economic impact on the City. Additional visitors are expected to provide an additional spend of approximately £2.7million in the local economy, generating up to 50 jobs in the tourism industry of the City.
- 6.2 The scheme therefore provides a significant overall benefit, both to the Abbey itself in terms of the quality of their offer, but also the wider economy of the City, maintaining Bath as a premier destination.
- 6.3 The Council has no approved budget to deliver any further public toilets or a museum of medieval history. This lease provides a cost effective means of providing these facilities to benefit residents and visitors.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 For the Council to pay for a public toilet and a museum of medieval history: Neither the additional toilets nor the museum form part of an approved Council strategy or budget. Their provision as part of the Abbey Project therefore provides a cost effective means of providing these additional services in Central Bath which would otherwise not be delivered.
- 7.2 Not to provide the lease. This would add additional risk into the Abbey's ability to deliver the whole project and access the HLF grant.
- 7.3 Requiring a cash lease: This would reduce the Abbey's ability to put funds that have been raised into the delivery of the Footprint project.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Property Services, Cabinet members for Resources and Economic Development, Council Leader, Finance Team, Regeneration Team, Bath Tourism Plus.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	<i>John Wilkinson 01225 396593</i>
Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	