

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting2nd August 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Computer Room Location

2. Record of the Decision

It was explained that the purpose of the report was to seek approval to proceed with the procurement process which was required to begin preparations for relocating the computer room in light of the on-going problems with the existing facility in Municipal Buildings. The report also described the influencing factors that the Stockton Darlington Partnership had on the location decisions.

It was noted that there were on-going problems with the existing computer room in Municipal Buildings and that there was a need to relocate the facility. In February 2007 Cabinet approved funds for the fit-out of a new computer room as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan and 2007/8 Budget. Also in February 2007 a progress report on the Stockton Darlington Partnership highlighted the location of the computer room as a key feature of the work being undertaken to assess suitable locations for the services included in the Partnership proposal across both Boroughs.

It was explained that work on identifying a suitable alternative computer room location had had to be mindful of the potential partnering with Darlington Borough Council. Should the Partnership proceed, then a joint computer room was planned which would host both Stockton and Darlington's ICT systems. Consequently, the Property Sections and ICT of both Authorities had worked together in identifying and reviewing suitable properties both from within the existing Authority portfolios and from what was available in the private sector and with other Authorities. It was noted that external assistance had also been sought in outlining the requirements of a modern day facility.

Members were advised that the on-going risks associated with the existing room had meant that the property search and the selection of a location had had to run in advance of the approval for the Stockton Darlington Partnership.

It was explained that a number of space and technical requirements were defined for the new computer room as its location was a key factor in deciding the location of the other proposed partnership services. Another factor taken into account was the eventual location of the ICT staff. Although ideally they would be next to the computer room, the two could be split so long as the travelling time for staff visiting the room was not too great so as to cause operational problems for the ICT Service. Another factor taken into account was the need to ideally place the new room close to one of the existing network cores of either Stockton (Municipal Buildings) or Darlington (Town Hall), as this would save significant costs of providing high speed resilient network links to both Authorities as opposed to just one. It was noted that it would also save the alternative approach of moving all the existing network links to the new room, which again was an expensive option.

Members considered an initial list of properties and options and the reasons why they were discounted.

Members also considered a summary of a further detailed investigation which was undertaken on properties which looked a more suitable option.

Having considered the options Cabinet noted that the most viable location would be the empty ground floor area within Darlington Town Hall. This was based upon factors such as cost, security, specification, timescales and accessibility. It was explained that although a project plan was currently being developed, it was anticipated that the new room would be commissioned during the Spring of 2008. It was noted that the risk of the Partnership not receiving approval was mitigated by the fact that the specification and tendering for the build and fit-out of the computer room would complete around the same time as the Partnership Cabinet report in October. Therefore, if the Partnership was approved, the tender would be awarded and a head start on the process would have been gained. If the Partnership was not approved, a revised property search would take place at that time and where possible, the results of the tender process would be applied to the new location. It was noted that due to the specialist nature of a new computer room, external assistance would be used to develop a detailed specification and also to build the facility.

It was explained that in being remote to the network core in Municipal Buildings, Stockton's ICT services would be provided by two high-speed network links from Darlington Town Hall to Municipal Buildings in Stockton. Each individual link would be capable of handling the Authority's network traffic and therefore two would be used to provide resilience to the ICT services.

Members were advised that should there be a need for Darlington Borough Council to vacate the Town Hall premises within the planned initial ten years of the Partnership, a clause would be written into the Partnership agreement stating that Darlington Borough Council would underwrite the costs of a future move of the computer room, should this be necessary.

RESOLVED that the start of the procurement process associated with the relocation of the existing computer room be approved.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The on-going high risks associated with the existing computer room facilities in Municipal Buildings.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 10th August 2007

Proper Officer
06 July 2007