

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

2 AUGUST 2007

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Corporate and Social Inclusion – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Laing

COMPUTER ROOM LOCATION

1. **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to proceed with the procurement process which is 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 describes the influencing factors that the Stockton Darlington Partnership has on the location decisions.

2. **Recommendation**

That Members approve the start of the procurement process associated with the relocation of the existing computer room.

3. **Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)**

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

4. **Members Interests**

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same

purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;

- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATION

That Members approve the start of the procurement process associated with the relocation of the existing computer room.

BACKGROUND

1. Members will be aware of the on-going problems with the existing computer room in Municipal Buildings and the 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 Members will recall that the 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.

IDENTIFYING SUITABLE LOCATIONS

2. Work on identifying a suitable alternative computer room location has had to be mindful of the potential partnering with Darlington Borough Council. Should the Partnership proceed, then a joint computer room is planned which will host both Stockton and Darlington's ICT systems. Consequently, the Property Sections and ICT of both Authorities have worked together in identifying and reviewing suitable properties both from within the existing Authority portfolios and from what is available in the private sector and with other Authorities. External assistance has also been sought in outlining the requirements of a modern day facility.
3. The on-going risks associated with the existing room has meant that this property search and the selection of a location has had to run in advance of the approval for the Stockton Darlington Partnership. The risks associated with this approach covered later in this report.
4. At the outset, a number of space and technical requirements were defined for the new computer room as its location is a key factor in deciding the location of the other proposed partnership services. Another factor taken into account is the eventual location of the ICT staff. Although ideally they should be next to the computer room, the two can be split so long as the

travelling time for staff visiting the room is not too great so as to cause operational problems for the ICT Service. Another factor taken into account is 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 saves significant costs of providing high speed resilient network links to both Authorities as opposed to just one. Likewise, it also saves the alternative approach of moving all the existing network links to the new room, which again is an expensive option.

5. An initial list of properties and options were considered and subsequently discounted:

Location	Reason why discounted
Resource Centre – Billingham Town Centre	The size of the building is not adequate. Would need significant works to bring up to standard to make suitable. Risk that may be included in the Billingham Town Centre re-development.
Yarm Road Depot	Access restrictions pose potential problems. Noxious smells from the abattoir would make it undesirable for the staff working there. A suitable alternative for the re-cycling centre and salt store would need to be found. Nearby is crushing for building materials which may cause significant problems for the filters and air cooling for the ICT room.
Extending Darlington Town Hall existing computer suite	Ceiling heights are not capable of providing sufficient headroom. 1 st floor location causes access problems.
Stirling House (Option 1 - Use Stirling House as the Computer room)	Would require all the ground floor to be stripped out and there are problems in moving some walls. Need to re-locate the existing staff into other accommodation.
Stirling House (Option 2 - Extend the existing building to house the computer room)	More expensive re-build costs as the new build needs to be sympathetic to the existing building. Existing building needs to have additional modifications to it to compensate for the “carbon footprint”. Significant loss of car parking spaces.
Alternative space within Municipal Buildings	Not ideal use of prime central office space. Displacement of staff required to another location Longevity of location.
Bowesfield - as a new build site	Query over possible land use. Prohibitive cost.
Remote hosting at Sunderland City Council	Prohibitive rental costs. Prohibitive network connection costs to Stockton and Darlington. Distance for access.
Remote hosting at Durham County Council	Prohibitive rental costs. Prohibitive network connection costs to Stockton and Darlington. Distance for access.

6. Further detailed investigation was undertaken on properties which looked a more suitable option. Below is a summary of some of the detail:

Property	Advantages	Disadvantages
Primrose Hill Stockton on Tees	Initial rental charge is very low approximately £4.00 per sq ft	Security presents a problem hence the low rental cost.

Property	Advantages	Disadvantages
Allens West Eaglescliffe	An empty shell that could be fitted out to the required specification as detailed in the ICT consultant's report. Good access routes. Could be fitted out in a relatively short space of time	Some uncertainty around the long term use of the property. Expensive rental costs.
Lingfield Point Darlington	An empty shell that could be fitted out to the required specification as detailed in the ICT consultant's report. Good access routes. Power supply likely to be adequate as a manufacturing factory. Could be fitted out in a relatively short space of time. 24 hour security on site. A relatively secure site away from the public.	Additional rental cost although could be off-set by other properties being brought back "in-house". Specification higher than the basic shell required for a computer room – value for money therefore an issue. Links back to the respective councils are expensive. Space would be better used as office accommodation for staff.
Various office development sites across Stockton and Darlington	An empty shell that could be fitted out to the required specification as detailed in the ICT consultant's report. Good access routes. Could be fitted out in a relatively short space of time – although will be dependent when the next available properties can come on line.	Additional rental cost although could be off-set by other properties being brought back "in-house". Specification higher than the basic shell required for a computer room – value for money therefore an issue. Links back to the respective councils may be expensive.
Ground floor area Darlington Town Hall	An existing empty space that can be fitted to match the exact requirements in the consultants report. Frees up office space in Darlington Town Hall. Can be built and commissioned whilst other computer room is still operational. More cost effective than rental costs as uses "blank" space.	Some rubble that is in the space that will need to be removed.

PREFERRED LOCATION

- As a result of this comprehensive property search exercise, the empty ground floor area within Darlington Town Hall has been identified as the most viable solution based upon factors such as cost, security, specification, timescales and accessibility. Although a project plan is currently being developed, it is anticipated that the new room will be commissioned during the Spring of 2008. The risk of the Partnership not receiving approval is mitigated by the fact that the specification and tendering for the build and fit-out of the computer room will complete around the same time as the Partnership Cabinet report in October. Therefore, if the Partnership is approved, the tender will be awarded and a head start on the process will have been gained. If the Partnership is not approved, a revised property search will take place at that time and where possible, the results of the tender process will be applied to this new location. Due to the

specialist nature of a new computer room, external assistance will be used to develop a detailed specification and also to build the facility.

8. In being remote to the network core in Municipal Buildings, Stockton's ICT services will be provided by two high-speed network links from Darlington Town Hall to Municipal Buildings in Stockton. Each individual link will be capable of handling the Authority's network traffic and therefore two will be used to provide resilience to the ICT services.
9. 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 will be written into the Partnership agreement stating that Darlington Borough Council will underwrite the costs of a future move of the computer room, should this be necessary.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

The financial implications are to be presented as part of the overall Partnership Business Case which is to be presented to Cabinet in October. Should the Partnership not be approved, a further report will be presented regarding the options for a Stockton computer room.

Legal

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The risks associated with the existing computer room have been covered in previous reports relating to the computer room, the corporate risk register and audit reports. At times the risk score has been 20. Currently it is measured as 16 (High Risk).

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Strategy associated with this report.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

The move of the computer room forms part of the comprehensive consultation strategy put in place for the Stockton Darlington Partnership.

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Background Papers

Cabinet report February 2007 Medium Term Financial Plan and 2007/8 Budget

Cabinet report February 2007 – Stockton Darlington Partnership

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property

The current review of assets will take into account any requirements of the Partnership.