

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting16th May 2013

1. Title of Item/Report

ASSET REVIEW, SCHOOL CAPITAL AND SITE DISPOSAL PLAN

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report that provided an update relating to the Asset Review, Schools Capital Investment Strategy and Site Disposal Plan. Included in the report were findings of the Public Consultation, feedback and Equality Impact Assessments relating to the Library Service.

Also included in the report was an option following an exercise to review the future of The Education Development Centre Site. In addition Cabinet were provided with recommendations relating to the development of a Community Building Trust.

Members noted that significant progress continued to be made in reviewing the office portfolio and the Billingham Library/Access to Services Development was scheduled to open in winter 2014.

With regard to Libraries, Members were reminded that the Council was statutorily required to provide a comprehensive public library service.

In the summer of 2012, the Council had conducted initial 6 week general consultation on the library service. The key messages were that the public valued a wide ranging and up to date book stock, well trained staff and flexibility in accessing services locally.

Subsequently, further consultation had taken place between 10 January and 4 April 2013, which included scenarios. Full details of the consultation results were provided to Members.

The overall message received from the Consultation had been of agreement to the principle of the scenarios proposed. In all cases, comments had shown a considerable general support for the library service and its facilities locally, a concern at the potential reduction of services and opening hours, but a realisation that the retention of at least some local access to the service would be valuable.

It was explained that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) had been undertaken for each of the community libraries affected directly by the proposals for co-location and reduced service provision. Members were provided with copies of those EIAs and noted the findings.

Members considered conclusions coming from the scenarios, public consultation feedback and EIAs, for future delivery of library services in the Borough.

Members noted that the proposals recommended for implementation would generate annual savings of £350,000. When added to the savings of £47,000 per annum already achieved this would equate to an annual saving of £397,000, in line with the target saving from this aspect of the EIT Review of £400,000.

Co-location would require a level of capital investment and the agreed strategy committed to funding of the co-location developments and a level of improvements to existing town centre libraries. This would now be progressed and funding had been identified in the Council's MTFP to support the delivery of the Asset Review and would be available for this purpose.

With regard to Community Assets, Cabinet was informed that the Catalyst Board had concluded that the development of a Community Building Trust, using the governance framework of a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, could deliver a sustainable model for the future management of community building assets. Under this model specific community assets would be transferred to the Community Building Trust to be operated and managed by that organisation. The Community Building Trust would be formed as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and as a separate legal entity to Catalyst. It was anticipated that existing management committees and the Council would have representation in the governance structure.

Benefits would include:

- Protection of long term future of assets
- Access to grant funding
- Financial benefits of charitable status e.g. NNDR/VAT
- Opportunities to maximise usage and income via centralised booking system
- Reduced cost structure
- Potential training opportunities
- A vehicle for future transfers

Catalyst had developed a draft business plan involving individual management committees for the formation and future operation of a Community Building Trust.

In their business planning process, Catalyst had considered which community assets could be brought together to form a viable Community Building Trust. They have requested that the Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre be considered for transfer into the Trust. Their business plan had therefore been prepared on the basis of the following buildings being transferred to the Trust:-

- Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre
- Robert Atkinson Youth and Community Centre
- Elmwood Youth and Community Centre
- Grangefield Youth and Community Centre
- Stillington Youth and Community Centre

A further expression of interest had also been received in respect of the Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre and, in line with the agreed strategy, it was recommended that the property be advertised as being available for asset transfer with a deadline for any further expressions of interest of one month. The organisations would then be invited to submit a business plan and the findings would be subject to a further report to Cabinet.

It was expected that annual savings amounting to £360,000 could ultimately be generated by the model proposed.

Members were then given an update on the Schools Capital Investment Strategy

The funding available for investment in schools maintenance was provided to members.:

- A balance of funding from the funds identified for planned maintenance in the previous year of £0.780m would be carried forward for use in 2013/14. The DfE capital maintenance funding allocation for 2013/14 was £2.070m. In addition, schools in Stockton had agreed to top slice Delegated School Grant to create a fund for utilisation on prioritised maintenance and for maintained schools this amounted to £0.625m. Therefore a total of £3.475m was available in respect of addressing prioritised condition issues in maintained schools.

- A detailed update and review had identified prioritised maintenance schemes with a value of £1.750m for 2013/14. It was recommended that these be agreed and funded from the available

balance, leaving £1.725m to be utilised in 2014/15. It was recommended that this sum be ring-fenced for use to address prioritised maintenance schemes in 2014/15.

Cabinet was reminded that it had previously agreed the relocation of services from the Education Development Centre, in order to make savings and also to avoid repair and maintenance costs, and to undertake an options appraisal on the future of the site. In the context of the increasing pressure on school places, the preferred use of this site was to relocate Crooksbar Primary School to increase pupil capacity.

It was explained that in the report to Cabinet in June 2012, Members had approved, in principle, the disposal of a number of ex school sites subject to examining:

- Quantity of land available for sale
- Level of community facilities on site and extent of use
- Level and quality of open space and playing pitches

It was also agreed that further details would be provided to cabinet on each site prior to any recommendation for disposal. Members were provided with details of recommendations relating to the following sites:

- Norton School Site
- Blakeston School Site
- Billingham Campus School
- Frederick Natrass

During discussion of the various issues under discussion Cabinet heard representations from local Ward Members.

RESOLVED that:

1. the findings of the Public Consultations, feedback and Equality Impact Assessments be noted and the implementation of the following changes to the delivery of individual libraries based on these conclusions be agreed:

- In Billingham:
 - a. the two existing libraries be merged into one as part of the Town Centre combined library and customer service building,
 - b. Bedale Library building be offered for expressions of interest in community asset transfer,
 - c. Roseberry Library site be incorporated into the redevelopment of

Billingham Town Centre.

- At Eggescliffe, the existing service be maintained at the current site, open for a minimum of 17 hours per week, and that the use, cost and co-location options should be reviewed for this site in 2014.
 - At Roseworth, the library building be closed and the service relocated at the Redhill Children's Centre in a shared building, open for a minimum of 17 hours per week.
 - At Thornaby Westbury St Library, the library building be closed and the service relocated at the Riverbank Children's Centre in a shared building, open for a minimum of 17 hours per week, and that the use, cost and co-location options should be reviewed for this site in 2014.
 - At Fairfield, the existing service be maintained at the current site, open for a minimum of 22 hours per week, and that the use, cost and co-location options should be reviewed for this site in 2014.
 - In the six town centre libraries, weekend opening hours be adjusted to realise staffing efficiencies in line with the preferences and views expressed in the public consultation responses.
 - In those areas where library service hours would be reduced or where buildings would be amalgamated, existing mobile library and housebound services be reconfigured to enable those most vulnerable to continue to use the service.
2. the principle of development of a Community Building Trust be endorsed and, subject to satisfactory development of a business plan, the consequential asset transfer of the buildings outlined in the report be agreed. Also, that Ragworth Neighbourhood Centre be advertised as being available for asset transfer following expressions of interest being received.
 3. the update to the Schools Capital Investment Strategy be noted and the approach agreed
 4. the Site Disposal Strategy be agreed, including the following recommendations for specific sites :
 - a. That the preferred solution for the Education Centre Site be conversion to a primary school to support the need for additional pupil places in that area with a small proportion of the site released for disposal. This would be subject to a detailed feasibility exercise and to identification of funding and would also release the current Crooks barn

site for disposal.

b. The Norton School Site be utilised to create a hub of playing pitches in line with the Playing Pitch Strategy in addition to a development site. This would also release sites at Darlington Back Lane and Yarm Road, a proportion of which would be sold to fund the developments.

c. the demolition of the buildings on the Blakeston School Site and the release of the footprint as a development site for disposal. The costs of demolition to be funded from the sale receipt.

d. that the buildings no longer required on the site of Billingham Campus School be demolished and the site be approved for development and disposal. The costs of demolition to be funded from the sale receipt.

e. that the former school field of Frederick Natrass be made available for affordable housing.

5. the position on the provision of further affordable housing be noted and that a further report be brought in due course.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Implement proposals for Library Strategy and Community Assets and agree land disposal plans.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Coleman declared a personal, non prejudicial in respect of agenda item 11 - Asset Review, School Capital and Site Disposal Plan.

Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal, non prejudicial in respect of agenda item 11 - Asset Review, School Capital and Site Disposal Plan.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Asset Review, School Capital and Site Disposal Plan as he was a Governor of Fredrick Natrass School.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

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

Midnight on Friday, 24 May 2013

Proper Officer
20 May 2013