

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Twyford Community Hub Business Case</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Thursday, 26 September 2019
<b>WARD</b>	Twyford;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Regeneration - Charlotte Haitham Taylor

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

To further the Council's commitment to supporting the development of a new library within Twyford on the site of the Old Polehampton Boys School. This report presents the financial requirements of the project and outlines how it will redevelop a historic building into a permanent location for the library in Twyford.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive:

- 1) continues to support the relocation of the Twyford Library to the Old Polehampton Boys School site;
- 2) notes the financial assessment, including the potential for a £640k capital bid in 2020/21, and notes the expected benefits for residents;
- 3) will receive a further report detailing the proposed lease arrangements with the Polehampton Trust for approval.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At its meeting in July 2019, the Executive agreed it's in principle support for the relocation of the Twyford Library to the Old Polehampton Boys School in Polehampton Close. The Old Polehampton Boys School is a Grade 2 listed building that is owned by the Polehampton Trust, a local charity with the core aim of supporting local residents in need and children's educational development in the Twyford area.

The Executive also authorised the Director of Locality and Customer Services to develop accurate costs and timings for the delivery of the new library, to obtain renewed planning approval for the project, and to enter into negotiations with the Polehampton Trust to achieve a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent.

Both the renovation of the Old Boys School building and establishing a permanent home for the Twyford library are longstanding local ambitions for residents in the Twyford area.

The cost estimate for the relocation of the library is £640,000, covering the renovation of the Old Boys School building, the relocation of the library stock and services, and the

necessary project management activities. As with all estimates, more accurate costs will be determined through the detailed design and build process.

There is an existing planning approval for the redevelopment of the Old Polehampton Boys School that is due to expire in October 2019. This planning approval has a significant number of pre-commencement conditions that need to be discharged before works can commence. It is not possible to complete this work before the planning application expires and therefore a new application will be required.

Negotiations have commenced with the Polehampton Trust to secure the lease for the property. Due to the length of the lease it will be necessary to bring back the final terms to the Executive for approval at a later date.

Funding for the project will need to be approved as part of the Council's Capital Programme for 2020/21 and therefore work is not expected to start on site until both this and the planning application have been approved.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Polehampton Trust is a Twyford based charity who actively provide funding for local activities (approx. £60K each year) and are the owners of the Old Polehampton Boys School building, a Grade 2 listed building located in Polehampton Close, Twyford.

In recent years, the Old Boys School has operated as a base for a local theatre group. Whilst the Old Boys School building is structurally sound, its internal condition is particularly dated and would require a significant amount of work to bring it up to an acceptable standard for the delivery of local authority services.

Part of the Old Polehampton Boys School building has already been converted to residential use. The Trust has a longstanding aspiration to develop the rest of Old Polehampton Boys School building into a community facility, and in October 2016 the Trust received planning approval for their plans to do this. The Trust have been unable to make any further progress on this due to lack of available funding.

Despite the inability to raise the funds required for the redevelopment of the Old Boys School, the aspiration to bring it back into use is well supported by the local community.

Wokingham Borough Council has operated the library in Twyford since it took over the responsibility for library services in 1998. The current library is located in a porta-cabin building in Polehampton Close on the opposite side of the road to the Polehampton building. The provision of a comprehensive and efficient library service is a statutory requirement for the Council as specified in the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964.

There is a consistent view amongst local residents that they would like a more permanent home for Twyford library other than its current porta-cabin site.

The relocation of the library would provide an opportunity to find an alternative use for the current library site. Whilst the existing library building covers an area approximately 114m<sup>2</sup>, the total size of the site is much larger at 800m<sup>2</sup>. Another longstanding ambition within Twyford is to increase the amount of available public parking spaces for local residents as a lot of the available parking in the area is used each day by commuters.

## **BUSINESS CASE**

The Old Polehampton Boys School is a historic Grade 2 listed building that requires a substantial amount of renovation to be able to be used as a public library. There is no internal heating system and the roof and walls require insulation to be able to maintain the correct amount of thermal comfort for library users and staff. The entrances to the building need to be altered to ensure disabled access and other mobility requirements consistent with current building access regulations.

All of these renovations need to be completed in a manner consistent with the buildings heritage, meaning that appropriate methods and materials used need to be approved prior to the renovation works commencing. As with the development of all new or renovated Council facilities, making the building as environmentally sustainable as possible will also be a priority.

As part of the renovations, a new entrance lobby would be created at the side of the building to provide suitable access to the library and to usefully provide a small increase to its size.

In addition to the costs of delivering these renovations, there is also a cost to the relocation of the library services and stock. This includes the relocation of a range of I.T. equipment available in the library and the well-used self-service kiosk.

Finally, the planning approval for the redevelopment of the Old Boys School would need to be resubmitted due to the existing approval expiring in October this year. The existing planning approval had thirteen pre-commencement conditions that would need to be discharged before any renovation work could begin, and it is expected that these conditions would be included within any new approval.

The estimated costs for the renovation of the Old Boys School and the relocation of the library are summarised as follows:

Old Boys School Alterations and Refurbishment	£483,877
Planning Application & Design Work	£50,719
Professional Fees	£60,719
Library Relocation Costs	£17,000
Pre-Commencement Conditions	*£25,000
	*provisional estimate
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£637,317</b>

A bid to the Council's Capital programme for 2020/21 and 2021/22 has been submitted to secure the necessary funding for the delivery of this project.

### **Lease Arrangements with the Polehampton Trust**

As agreed by the Executive in July 2019, Officers have begun negotiations with the Polehampton Trust to secure a lease for the Council of 99 years at a peppercorn rent. These negotiations include the confirmation that the Council will renovate and maintain the Old Boys School building for the length of the lease, and that its primary use will be as the local library so that it remains consistent with the aims of the Polehampton Trust. These aims are:

*“For the relief of persons in need, hardship or distress and the promotion of education of persons resident in the former ecclesiastical parishes of St Mary the Virgin, Twyford and St James the Great, Ruscombe”.*

The Polehampton Trust is a registered charity. In terms of the regulations relating to a registered charity, any lease of seven years or more is treated as a disposal of an asset, and therefore the Polehampton Trust will need to take certain steps to ensure it is acting appropriately in agreeing a lease with the Council.

Responsibilities for Charities Disposing of an Asset can be summarised as follows.

Its trustees must be sure that:

- they have permission to sell or lease the property – either in their governing document or in the law
- there is nothing in their governing document that prevents them selling or leasing the property
- the charity actually owns the title to the property
- the sale or lease is in the charity’s best interests
- if the property is designated for a particular purpose, that the sale or lease doesn’t go against this

The law says that Trustees must:

- try to get the best deal for your charity
- take written advice, including a valuation, from a qualified surveyor before you agree a sale or lease
- advertise the sale or lease, unless the surveyor says otherwise

It may be necessary to refer the proposed lease arrangements to the Charity Commission for confirmation if the Trustees are not confident that they are achieving the best deal for their charity.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£50k	tbc	Revenue & Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£640K	tbc	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	NA	NA

### **Other Financial Information**

The cost of resubmitting the planning application will need to be met from existing budgets during 2019/20.

### **Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation**

The renovation of the Old Boys School and the relocation of the library to a permanent location are both longstanding ambitions of residents in Twyford.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

EqIA attached

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
None

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