

7th JANUARY 2020

KEY DECISION? NO

CIVIC QUARTER – ELLES HALL

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following the successful relocation of tenants and community groups, the Council now has vacant possession of the Elles Hall, the former Community Centre building. The site will be redeveloped as part of the wider Civic Quarter regeneration project and the Council has confirmed that the current building will be demolished as it is no longer fit for purpose.

Cabinet are requested to approve a capital budget of £95,000 to undertake demolition and other pre-development works associated with the Community Centre building.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for a capital budget of £95,000 from the Civic Quarter capital project (no. 5405) for the purposes of pre-development and demolition works in relation to Elles Hall.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Report no. FIN1909 (Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax Level – 5th February 2019) sets out an estimated level of capital expenditure for Town Centre regeneration projects for Aldershot and Farnborough (Aldershot Town Centre and Farnborough Civic Quarter) - £28.3m in 2019/20, with a further £13m and £26.7m forecast for 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- 2.2. At appendix 4 of that report, it sets out the following budget estimates in relation to the Civic Quarter:
- 2019/20 £10m
 - 2020/21 £10m
 - 2021/22 £19m
- 2.3. Use of these budgets is subject to Business Case or other approval by the Cabinet. To date, the Council has utilised the budgets for the purposes of acquiring the freehold land associated with the former police station

following Cabinet approval in March 2019 (Report no. RP1905). This report brought forward part of the £10m budget allocated to 2019/20. The remaining capital budget allocation for 2019/20 is approx. £4.5m.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

General

- 3.1. In order to facilitate the Civic Quarter regeneration scheme, the Council has secured the vacant possession of Elles Hall community centre following the successful relocation of tenants into alternative premises. The Council has made its intentions clear that it will be seeking to demolish the existing community centre building in the new year (Arena Magazine – Winter 2019 edition).
- 3.2. Since the building's closure, it has been the subject of unauthorised trespass/vandalism and it is in the Council's interest to hoard the premises and thereafter demolish the current building to remove health and safety risks and to facilitate the regeneration of the Civic Quarter.

Alternative Options

- 3.3. The Council could opt to hold the property vacant until such a time that a planning application is submitted for the Civic Quarter. On the basis that the current building carries risk of trespass and vandalism, it is considered that the preferred approach should be to proceed with demolition as soon as is practical.

Consultation

- 3.4. The demolition works will require the closure of the Community Centre car park. The Council's Parking Team has been made aware of this and, subject to Cabinet approving these proposals, a period of advertisement reflecting the fact that the car park will be closing will be undertaken prior to the hoardings being erected.
- 3.5. The Council's CCTV team has been notified of the proposed demolition as the building currently hosts a camera that will need to be decommissioned as part of the demolition process. To prevent risks associated with the pond, which will no longer be under surveillance the demolition hoardings will enclose the pond as well as the car park areas. The Council's Communications Team has been made aware of this and will be communicating the fact prior to the hoardings being erected.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

- 4.1. The key risk that requires consideration relates to health and safety, on the basis that the property is held vacant and trespass/vandalism can (and has) occurred. Liability for any potential injury sits with the Council in its role as freeholder.
- 4.2. From a reputational perspective, the Council has set out that the Community Centre will be demolished early in the new year on the understanding that the site will form part of the Civic Quarter redevelopment. As such, it is important to take forward the proposed works.

Legal Implications

- 4.3. The appointment of contractors to undertake the works will accord with the Council's procurement tendering processes.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.4. The proposed demolition works have been the subject of soft market testing which indicate that the costs of these works would be in the region of £95,000. A budget of this amount is requested for approval by Cabinet to support the process. This budget, which will be finalised through the procurement process, is anticipated to cover the full demolition process including disconnection of utilities, erection of hoardings, undertaking removal of hazardous materials and the wholesale demolition of the building to grade and removal of the arisings. It also accounts for any external resource required to oversee the process on behalf of the Council subject to internal capacity.
- 4.5. The proposed extent of hoardings will result in the loss of income from the Community Centre car parks. Since the closure of the centre, income has been nominal on the basis that it is significantly underutilised.
- 4.6. The Council has been incurring an empty property rates liability since 29th June 2019. This totals £10,489.67 for 2019/20 and would be circa £14,000 in 2020/21. The demolition of the building will remove this liability.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.7. There are no known Equalities Impact Implications arising from the proposed scope of works.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for a capital budget of £95,000 from the Civic Quarter capital project (no. 5405) for the purposes of pre-development and demolition works in relation to Elles Hall.
- 5.2. The works are required in order to bring forward regeneration proposals associated with the wider Civic Quarter and reflects the Place priorities set out within the Rushmoor Council Business Plan – continuing to drive forward the regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough town centres.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Report no. FIN1909 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax Level
Report no. RP1905 Farnborough Civic Quarter – Site Assembly

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