

The background of the slide features the coat of arms of the Government of Western Australia. It includes a crown at the top with four floral ornaments, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: a cross, top-right: a stags head, bottom-left: a sailing ship, bottom-right: a bird), and a ribbon at the bottom with the motto 'AN E FOR A'.

Agenda Item 10

Update on the West and Central Advice Hubs

Falkirk Council

Title: Update on the West and Central Advice Hubs
Meeting: Executive
Date: 13 March 2018
Submitted By: Director of Development Services / Director of Corporate & Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Advice Hub project for the West area at Carronbank House and the options being explored for the Central Hub facility covering Falkirk and neighbouring communities

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Executive:-

- (1) Notes progress with the creation of the West Advice Hub at Carronbank House.**
- (2) Notes progress with the feasibilities for the Central Hub and agrees that the preferred solution is to progress a joint model for a repurposing of the Falkirk Library building at Hope Street, with a joint operational model finalised to allow delivery to the timescales outlined in para 4.7.**
- (3) Requests that the Falkirk Community Trust Board considers the repurposing of Hope Street to allow a community hub to be delivered alongside a complementary library service.**

3. Background

- 3.1. The Executive on the 26 September 2017 considered a report by the Director of Corporate & Housing Services which provided an update on the Advice and Support Hub in the East and sought approval to roll this service model out across the West and Central areas. The Executive agreed to:-
- Extend the Advice and Support Hub model to the West and Central areas, replace the remaining One Stop Shops, Finance and Housing public offices with Central and West Advice Hubs and outreach services;
 - Carry out detailed property survey work required to conclude the options for the locations of the West and Central Advice Hubs;
 - Engage with communities to determine locations for outreach services, and
 - Receive a follow up report on the specific locations of West and Central Hubs.

3.2. The Executive also considered, at the same meeting, a report by the Director of Development Services which provided an update on the Strategic Property Review (SPR) and agreed to the :-

- Termination of the lease at Camelon One Stop Shop and Bonnybridge Finance office
- Renewal of the lease for a further year at Callendar Square
- Progression of works to prepare Carronbank House as a location for a West area hub facility

4. Progress

West Locality Hub at Carronbank House

4.1. Work has progressed on a detailed design for the Advice Hub on the ground floor at Carronbank House, contractors sought and it is hoped that the hub will be operational from August 2018.

4.2. Members will be aware that the hub will be one service within the building. As such discussions are now underway with other users of the building to develop a repurposing of the building to better suit all users. This will join up services where possible and practical and will meet future needs of customers and service users.

Central Locality Hub Feasibility

4.3. Following the decision in September, a review of properties available in the town centre which could accommodate the Central Hub requirements was undertaken and two options at Newmarket Street and High Street emerged from that work. A feasibility study for conversion was undertaken on each property. As both these properties were leased, the Council would face a dilapidations liability at the end of the lease. In addition both properties had disadvantages in terms of lay out etc. thus potentially compromising the delivery of services.

4.4. In addition to the two buildings noted above, an additional feasibility has been undertaken with Falkirk Community Trust to determine the suitability of Falkirk Library in Hope Street to be the site for a co-located hub and library. This would have advantages for both services in terms of footfall, complementary provision and also this being a building owned by the Council. In addition there is potential for other services and partners who are currently located in the town centre to relocate into this building if the design and costs permit.

4.5. The Hope Street option would allow the Council/FCT to invest in a building owned by the Council as well as delivering a more comprehensive customer service. It is proposed that the design would be flexible enough to allow users to be determined over time and to change depending on the needs of customers.

4.6. A co-located facility as discussed above, as well as having service linkages for customers would have both capital and running cost advantages to both the Council and the Trust. A sharing of property costs is of benefit to all

parties. Both the Trust and the Council may benefit from efficiencies in staff running costs during the hours of operation.

- 4.7. Even though this co-location option provides a much more attractive option, it requires to be delivered as a matter of urgency and if at all possible operational prior to the Council moving out of Callendar Square, in Jan 2019, when the lease expires. This leads to an extremely ambitious delivery timescale for the creation of the central hub to the following timescales:-
- Mar - Apr 18 – Agreement on location, brief and detailed design
 - Apr –Jun 18 - Statutory consents (included Listed Building consent if Falkirk Library)
 - Jun 18 – Contractor price
 - July 18 – Contractor award
 - Aug 18 – Contractor mobilisation
 - Aug 18 – Enabling moves with Library
 - Sept - Nov 18 – Adaptation works (13 weeks)
 - Dec 18 – Commissioning & furniture fit out
 - By January 2019 - Transfer of operation from Callendar Square
- 4.8. It is therefore imperative that a decision on the preferred location and shared operating model are taken as a matter of urgency if this project is to be delivered by December 2018.
- 4.9. There are a number of issues that have been considered and will continue to be considered as part of taking this project forward. These include consultation with staff, the issue of rates relief on Hope Street and engagement with existing users of the library. On the issue of rates relief the current indicative design would still mean the library being the most significant user and therefore the Trust would continue receives rates relief. Our existing One Stop Shops, and other locations considered for a Central Hub, incur a rates liability, therefore rates relief is not critical to the financial viability of the co-location option.
- 4.10. A detailed brief and design specification is being prepared for the combined library/hub facility that will assist in ensuring that there will be no rates liability for the Trust. The Trust has advised that they would want a specification that will ensure that delivery of a library service remains the principle use of the building with complementary customer-facing services, co-located in the building.
- 4.11. The Trust have also advised that they will undertake information-sharing and consultation with customers which will take the form of advising customers of the ongoing work to deliver a co-location solution and, to consult with them on preliminary designs. It is important this any consultation is taken forward timeously in order not to delay delivery.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. Consultations are on-going with operational services within Carronbank House, including NHSFV, IJB and Carronbank Medical Practice who are all aware of the proposals as outlined above. Likewise discussions are on-going with FCT and other partners on the Central Hub.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 The approved General Services capital programme has allocated £385K in 2017/18 for the creation of the West and Central Hubs with an additional provisional allocation of £500K for 2018/19, which will be considered as part of the Council budget deliberations. It is envisaged that this combined allocation of £885k will allow the creation of the Hubs as outlined above and that the revenue running costs will be met from within the partial re provisioning of existing revenue budgets for One Stop Shops.

The intensification of Carronbank House, once finally agreed, can be funded from the General Service Capital Programme allocation for the SPR.

Resources

- 6.2 The Council has appointed Hubco East Central to carry out the design of the West and Central Hub. Recognising the Hubco funding contribution to the SPR and that the timescale for implementation is extremely tight, it is recommended that Hubco East Central be utilised to procure the projects under the Territory Partnering Agreement.

Legal

- 6.3 Contracts will be established in appropriate terms with Hubco East Central.

Risk

- 6.4 An early decision is needed to overcome the risk that the Central Hub will not be operational prior to the end of the Callendar Square lease. This would necessitate that the Council either extend the lease for a further year or find an interim alternative service delivery model to replace the One Stop Shop. The Council must serve notice on the landlord for Callendar Square within 6 months of the expiry of the lease to enter negotiations for the dilapidations.

Equalities

- 6.5 An initial Equalities and Poverty Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this project, no negative impacts were identified and indeed the purpose of the Hub and outreach service is to improve services for the most vulnerable.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.6 Both these proposals will allow the Council to intensify within existing owned assets and make the use/purpose of the buildings more sustainable and better utilised for the long term.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Work on the progression Central Hubs has indicated a preferred solution which fully aligns with the principles of the SPR and the Council for the Future. This solution will allow the Council to invest in owned buildings but diversify and modernise their uses to underpin the new ways of service delivery that the Council is evolving.

Director of Development Services

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Date: 05 March 2018

Appendices

None

List of Background Papers:

None