

***179 Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG) Business Plan – key decision**

Due to adverse weather conditions the consultant (specialist firm in areas of culture, social and economic development, Perfect Moment) who had prepared the Thelma Hulbert Gallery Business Plan was unable to travel from Cornwall. The report would be considered at the March Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED The item was deferred until the next Cabinet on 5 March 2014.

REASON The consultant who was due to give a presentation on the Gallery Business Plan had been obliged to cancel.

180 Office accommodation – next steps – key decision

Richard Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive gave an up-date on the current position – the Council's decision to relocate its offices, the process, drivers, how the project was being taking forward, options and site scoring. He outlined the main issues within the update report which included:

- Latest developments regarding the Council's Heathpark sites
- New office options with detailed financial and non-financial analysis

Potential sites for EDDC offices had been reduced from 15 to a shortlist of 5. The analysis of the shortlisted site options plus an 'essential repairs only' option (the 'do nothing option') was given in detail in the report and accompanying documentation. Cabinet was now asked to give consideration to the two highest scoring options (Skypark and Clyst House) and make recommendations to Council. The Cabinet took into account the key risks and mitigations set out in the report plus legal and financial implications.

Reference was made to the recommendations of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 30 January 2014 which would be formally referred to the next meeting of Cabinet. It was commented that the recommendations failed to reflect information that had already been published.

Issues raised by Cabinet included:

- The Knowle offices were not fit for purpose.
- The location should provide an environment for modern service delivery.
- The public needed to be given clear reasons for the necessary move from Knowle.
- Clyst House, Winslade Park – this was an old building with access issues relating to its parkland location and distance from the main road network.
- The Skypark site offered easy access, it would be purpose built and would send a positive signal about the Council across the district. Being purpose built would mean that costs would be controlled. Should circumstances change, it would be easier to let or sell. Skypark being viewed as a key location for future economic development in the West of the district as well as a suitable location for shared services.
- Honiton was a good location but economic circumstances had to be taken into account in terms of project funding arrangements.
- Risks were identified and noted.
- The equality impact assessment which had been compiled with significant detail and care would be used as a reference document throughout the process.

180 **Office accommodation – next steps – key decision (continued)**

- Arrangements were needed for the Council to have an appropriate presence (including face to face contact) to meet customer needs in local towns.
- East Devon Business Centre – is this satisfying the Council's objectives of providing business support? A review of options was the way forward.

The preferred option of Skypark was unanimously supported by the Cabinet.

- RECOMMENDED**
- (1) that the further analysis provided in the report and its attachments be noted:
 - (2) that the opportunities, risks and risk management approach inherent in the project plan and its conditions and gateways be noted:
 - (3) **New Office**
 - (a) that the order of site preference advised in the report (site scoring outcomes were included at Appendix 2 to the report) and the Office Accommodation Executive Group's recommendation to decide between Clyst House, Winslade Park or Skypark be noted;
 - (b) that a preferred site and acquisition costs of Skypark- £986,000 (site) be recommended to Council and for detailed negotiation to begin. (Costs include Stamp Duty Land Tax but exclude VAT);
 - (c) that, subject to Council agreement, officers be instructed to take forward the agreed option under the continued guidance of the Executive Group, with key future decisions being subject to Cabinet and Council approval;
 - (d) that formal approval to proceed with the purchase be referred to Cabinet and Council – reports to this effect are anticipated for considered around July 2014;
 - (e) that, as an immediate action, a marketing exercise be conducted to engage developer interest (for a amount which was disclosed at the meeting) and ascertain the values and variety of proposals for development on the Knowle and Manstone Depot sites;

180 **Office accommodation – next steps – key decision (continued)**

- (f) that further project management costs through to completion of the Project in the sum of up to £88,000 for professional service costs including project management, architects, engineers and other designers), Fees, etc (excluding VAT) be agreed.
- (4) **Heathpark**
 - (a) that Terrace Hill be selected as the preferred developer for EDDC's former SITA depot and existing Business Centre site on Honiton Heathpark and the Council enter into conditional contract;
 - (b) that the requirement for a replacement for East Devon Business Centre be investigated further – to identify and secure by purchase, if required, a viable alternative site to develop a new Business Centre. This investigation to include a full review of the business support and service provided by the Council and whether the current provision meets the needs of new and growing businesses within the district.
- (5) that the Deputy Chief Executive (Development, Regeneration and Partnership), under the direction of the Office Accommodation Executive Group, be authorised to take forward actions in pursuit of the above recommendations and in accordance with the Project Gateway Plan.
- (6) that further work be carried out to investigate EDDC presence and service provision in our coastal and market towns to meet the needs of the local community in the most effective and modern way;

REASON

To progress the Council's plans to manage its assets effectively and to deliver modern public services.

181 **Regeneration revenue funding requirements**

Members considered the report of the Principal Regeneration Project Manager which gave an update on the financial spend on the Exmouth Regeneration projects to date. The next phase of revenue funding (excluding the Mamhead Slipway) was from April 2015; Members were asked to consider bringing forward a proportion of approved budget to fund a delivery plan for the next phases of Exmouth Vision Masterplan delivery.