

**28 March 2018****Agenda Item: 6**

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY HALL CAMPUS**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the commissioning of up to £25,000 of technical expertise to undertake a market assessment and feasibility study for the commercial use of a potential new build on the County Hall campus.

#### **Information**

2. The Council has embarked upon a Smarter Working Programme (SWP) and through that programme it is aiming to reduce the operational property portfolio as part of the development of a 10-year Asset Management Plan.
3. The Clasp block on the County Hall campus provided limited flexibility for modern working and the existence of asbestos meant that this building would not have been economically viable to reconfigure for use as a modern office space. Therefore, the final phase of the Ways of Working (WoW) programme, resulted in the building being demolished.
4. This has presented the Council with an opportunity to explore the development potential of the site further. In exploring this opportunity, one aspect that merits further consideration is the potential for taking any commercial opportunities that could provide a revenue stream, for the Council.
5. While any new proposals would be firstly and foremost for the Council's primary use and core functions there may also be an ability to use the space in a flexible manner and enable external groups to benefit from the space and also for the Council to realise a revenue stream. However, at this stage, this is simply an idea which appears to have merit and it requires market testing to be able to quantify any potential merits. A robust market assessment is a vital stage in appraising the pros and cons of an alternative use of the Council's premises.

#### **The Proposed Market Assessment**

6. The potential opportunity for commercial uses which could be a source for revenue generation and economic growth requires further investigation. The Council needs to understand this potential further and be very clear of the business case for this before it proceeds to any consideration of costs and any commitment to any detailed planning stage.

7. The required feasibility work is likely to cost in the region of £25,000. Once completed, the work will feed into the concept work for a potential new build which would require additional Member approval. Subject to the outcome of the market research, a more detailed and evidence-based report will be presented to Policy Committee setting out the business case for the new building linked to the Smarter Working Programme impact on the overall requirement for office space and identified financial savings.
8. At this stage Committee approval is only sought to carry out the necessary feasibility work to consider the market for commercial operations

### **Financial Implications**

9. The £25,000 will be met from the 2018/2019 consultancy budget held by Property Services.

### **Other Options Considered**

10. The Council could choose not to take forward the commissioning of additional technical expertise or support the further development. However this would miss the opportunity to secure the relevant market evidence and would leave the Council with no basis for informing any subsequent design principles if the concept were to move to the next stage.

### **Reasons for the Recommendations**

11. To seek Members approval to seeking external support which does not exist within the Council.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Policy Committee approves the commissioning of up to £25,000 of appropriate technical expertise to undertake a market assessment and feasibility study for the commercial use of a potential new build on the County Hall campus.

**Councillor Kay Cutts**  
**Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments [SSR 08/03/2018]**

13. Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

## **Financial Comments [RWK 05/03/2018]**

14. The financial implications are as set out in paragraph 9 of the report.

## **Background papers and Published documents**

- Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) affected**

- All