



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

### **PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE OF SIR JOHN ROBINSON HOUSE**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to commission up to £50,000 of additional technical expertise to undertake a feasibility study in relation to the commercial use of Sir John Robinson House.

#### **Background**

2. The Council is reviewing its office accommodation and modelling future portfolio options. This work has already identified an opportunity relating to Sir John Robinson House, Arnold (SJRH) which could result in this building being surplus to operational requirements. In the event of this occurring, an alternative and appropriate use for the building needs to be secured. This provides a potential opportunity for the Council to deliver one of the Council Plan 2017-2020 commitments of creating the best conditions for business investment and growth.
3. The availability of high quality business space is one of our key priorities. By looking at SJRH in this way, we have the opportunity not only to achieve this priority but also to safeguard an important asset which is part of the County's history, putting the building back into commercial use. This unique historical landmark is the former Home Brewery HQ building. It is a Grade II listed building and therefore merits protecting and enhancing and secured for future uses which would lend itself to commercial uses. Any future uses have to be sensitive to this Grade II protected status which would require detailed technical assessment.
4. The property provides circa 42,000 sq ft of offices, is situated on a self-contained site and has parking for over 180 cars. At only three miles from Nottingham city centre, the property lies outside of the Workplace Car Parking Levy zone, at the junction of Sir John Robinson Way and the A60 (Mansfield Road), one of Nottinghamshire's main arterial routes.
5. The immediate area surrounding the site has a mixture of uses including residential flats, retail (including a Sainsbury's superstore), a car dealership and a number of office buildings. The building could therefore be appropriate for a range of potential commercial uses.
6. Previous attempts to dispose of the building proved unsuccessful and anecdotal evidence suggests that this position has not changed in the market. The accuracy of this assumption on the market needs to be reassessed. Whilst the feasibility study does not tie the Council into any particular funding stream, an opportunity has arisen to pursue a non-binding

expression of interest for European Union (EU) grant funding via the Local Enterprise Partnership. The County Council, under the leadership of Councillor Reg Adair, has secured to prospect to attract up to 50% of the costs through this route. The additional external investment would help us to put one of Nottinghamshire's historic buildings back to commercial use and deliver on a number of the Council's commitments.

7. The window of opportunity to attract this oversubscribed external funding is short. To keep the option open, a funding bid would need to be brought forward in the next three months. However, before a decision can be reached about submitting a full bid for the funding, a number of further strands of work are required to shape the County Council's strategy for the building.
8. The strategic future of SJRH therefore requires the completion of a number of detailed assessments and evidence gathering in order to provide a robust business case. These are
  - A rigorous market assessment to understand demand for office and workspace and potential clients
  - A full building feasibility study
  - An options appraisal for the future management of the building, which should include options for generating an income stream for the Council.
9. These activities are likely to cost in the region of £50,000, will be undertaken in the next 10-12 weeks, subject to Policy Committee approval. The £50,000 will be met from the 2017/2018 Growth and Economic Development base budget. Once completed, a more detailed and evidence-based business case will be presented to Policy Committee setting out options for the future use of the building.

## **Other Options**

10. The Council could choose not to take forward the commissioning of additional technical expertise or support the further development of SJRH. However this would miss the opportunity to secure the funding currently available to support the development.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

11. Whilst our plans for growth are vital in providing for identified needs now and in the future, these must be achieved whilst preserving and protecting local character and distinctiveness in a well-planned and lasting way. Work to revitalise a high profile building and securing new investment will help create quality jobs, safeguard local character and add to the value of our economy.

## **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.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

13. It is recommended that Policy Committee approves the commissioning of up to £50,000 of additional technical expertise to undertake a feasibility study (that will not tie the Council into any particular funding stream) for the commercial use of Sir John Robinson House. Once completed, a more detailed and evidence-based business case will be presented to Policy Committee setting out options for the future use of the building.

## **COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS, MBE** **Leader of the Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Nicola McCoy-Brown, Growth and Economic Development ext. 72580

## **Constitutional Comments [CEH 27/12/2017]**

14. The recommendations fall within the remit of Policy Committee under its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments [SES 09/01/18]**

15. The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

The documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Sustainable Urban Development Strategy Funding Proposal Briefing (Digital Technology Hub, Nottinghamshire County Council), 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017
- 2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme (Call opened 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017) – available online at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/59c282e140f0b65db9b9eacb/PA2\\_3\\_4\\_D2N2\\_Updated\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/59c282e140f0b65db9b9eacb/PA2_3_4_D2N2_Updated_Final.pdf)

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

All