



Meeting County Council

date 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007

agenda item number

## **JOINT REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PROPERTY, AND THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND REGENERATION**

### **Community Hubs – Proposed revision to capital programme**

#### **Purpose of the report**

1. To seek approval to refocusing the approved capital programme in order to develop proposed Community Hubs at both Worksop and West Bridgford.
2. This is a key decision as it involves expenditure of over £1m and affects more than two divisions

#### **Background**

##### **3. Best Value Service Review**

3.1 The best value review of strategic property which reported to Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005 put forward an aspirational 'vision for public services' with modern purpose built buildings fit for the 21st Century serving main population centres. This vision includes some key themes for service delivery:

- Service integration, wherever possible and practical, around the needs of customers, to support the Access to Services Strategy.
- Moving away from the traditional departmentally confined service delivery models to provide integrated services under 'one roof'.
- Reducing the number of buildings that provide public services, while maintaining accessibility and improving the service.
- This vision should be taken forward with the development of the existing Library Service to provide a range of public services from a revised portfolio of attractive and innovatively designed buildings specific to this purpose. This should have a number of key benefits: a new role for libraries at the forefront of council services, greater integration of service delivery, improved customer access, investment in the property infrastructure and attractive designs acting as a community focal point.

3.2 This aspiration is reflected in the capital programme 2006-8 with an allocation of £4.55m to translate the “Vision into Reality – Libraries for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, through developing new ‘community hubs’ based on existing libraries offering joined-up service provision from innovatively designed new buildings. These hubs would provide access to a variety of County Council services in partnership with other organisations.

3.3 Since the Best Value Review, Nottinghamshire’s Great Library Debate has provided further evidence of public support for the concept of ‘community hubs’ with a library core, and a preference for major new builds to be Civic Landmarks in their communities.

#### **4. Integrating services**

4.1 Work across the Council has seen the development and firming up of the community hub concept, following on from the experience with the Bramley Centre, Southwell. In essence, the project aims to deliver three hubs (at Sutton-in-Ashfield, Worksop, and West Bridgford). These hubs will be accessible, attractive buildings where people will want to be in their own right which will add to the quality of the public space in the area.

4.2 Each community hub will be designed to attract people and will have a public space (with refreshments), facilities to access council services, a public library at its heart, and offer a mix of spaces for other services and the community to use.

4.3 The three pilots offer the opportunity to test the concept in different areas with different mixes of service. Sutton which has been completed represents a fairly small scale remodelling of an existing building, Worksop is a new build on a new site slightly nearer the town centre than the existing library, and West Bridgford would involve rebuilding a library on the existing and slightly expanded central site.

4.4 Across the three hubs, the following services and partners have indicated a strong interest and been involved in developing the concept:

- Young People’s Service to provide an “outreach” service to young people using the hub
- Registration Service;
- County Library Service;
- Trading Standards;
- County Contact;
- Adult Social Care and Health day services
- Rushcliffe Borough Council, which is looking to move its customer services centre into the West Bridgford Community Hub.

- Staff touchdown zones

4.5 The design of the community hubs will maximise efficiencies, for instance by maximising the sharing of space. They will operate as integrated services – e.g. by single reception areas, common facilities, shared meeting spaces, and sharing of staff workspaces wherever possible in accordance with the flexible working policy. Technology will be used including self-service book issue and returns, on-line access to advice and services, the whole building will be wifi enabled.

## 5. Progress on Developments

5.1 The first community hub has been achieved through remodelling Sutton Library. Within the constraints of the existing building it offers access to services through the County Contact, registration services, a café/bistro area, an improved meeting room, and a refurbished library with enhanced young people's area.

5.2 The existing libraries at Worksop and West Bridgford libraries both score poorly on suitability and sufficiency and are top priority for replacement. Development of the concept and initial design work identified that the initial capital programme allocation (£4.55m) is sufficient only to replace both these existing libraries on a like-for-like basis. It would not be sufficient either to increase the size of the libraries to reflect their "busyness" or to achieve the Council's ambitions for community hubs.

5.3 The library in Worksop is owned by Bassetlaw District Council and is a listed building. After a search for alternatives the proposed site for the community hub is on the car park on Memorial Avenue, close to the current library. At its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007 the Cabinet approved an exchange of land with Bassetlaw DC which should enable the County Council to achieve the Community Hub in Worksop, a replacement Youth and Community Centre in Retford, and a new Children's Centre in Retford.

5.4 Consideration has been given to a number of sites in the West Bridgford area and the most suitable is the existing library. Rushcliffe BC has indicated a willingness to transfer an additional area to increase the footprint of the building.

## 6. Improved Two-Tier Working

6.1 In earlier discussions, Rushcliffe Borough Council officers broadly welcomed and supported the proposal to develop the West Bridgford library into a community hub. The hub was seen as offering improved access to some of its services through the flexible interview and meeting rooms. Recently, however, the Borough Council has indicated a greater interest in participating in the West Bridgford Community Hub by relocating its customer services centre into the building and making a capital contribution of some £2m to the project.

6.2 Officer discussions have confirmed that the Borough Council is happy with the underlying principle that the community hubs offer integrated service access not merely co-location. Discussions continue on the managerial and operational aspects of delivering the Borough Council's customer services through the hub; however it is envisaged that this would be through integrated face-to-face access to both councils' services with the Borough Council's call centre also being located in the community hub. Appropriate partnership arrangements would be put in place.

## **7. Performance Improvements**

7.1 Experience from elsewhere indicates that replacing libraries with more modern and integrated services achieve performance improvements. For instance, the "Ideas Store" in Bow reported a 300% increase in visits and a 40% increase in loans. Similar figures were reported by the Stratford Library in Newham.

7.2 More locally, the smaller scale refurbishment of Ladybrook library has seen an increase in visitor numbers of 35% and book issues of 12.5%. If this was repeated at Worksop and West Bridgford we would see an increase of 146,000 visits and 80,000 issues. In Gershon terms this would be an uncashable efficiency. Of course, in the short-term while building is underway in West Bridgford it is likely that performance will deteriorate.

7.3 Encouraging young people to use the hubs and to access the youth service on a drop-in basis should improve the number of young people contacted and lead to increased performance through a proportion choosing to participate in youth service activities. This would also be expected to lead to a reduction in youth crime and anti-social behaviour. It also contributes to the priority identified through the 2006 IPSO/MORI survey for more facilities for young people.

7.4 The touchdown zones will improve staff efficiency by reducing travel time and costs.

## **Proposals for revising the Capital Programme**

8. The work to develop the concept of the community hubs has identified that the initial allocation in the capital programme is insufficient to achieve the council's ambitions. Consequently, efforts have been made to identify additional resources to enable both projects to go ahead as set out below.

## **9. Rephrasing other library developments**

9.1 The capital programme contains the following approved schemes for libraries:-

	Total (£m)	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
Community Hubs	4.55	1.60	2.95	
Mansfield Library refurbishment	2.00		2.00	
Rationalisation Gedling area	1.00			1.00
Newark extension	3.50			3.50
Total (£m)	11.05	1.60	4.95	4.50

- 9.2 The budget report to Cabinet suggested that elected members make a choice in relation to the development of the West Bridgford or the Worksop Community Hub. This would significantly reduce the programme.
- 9.3 As an alternative, it is proposed to defer the library rationalisation in Gedling and Newark Library extension and to transfer the budget provision for these schemes to the community hub programme. This would increase the budget to £9.05m and enable both community hubs to be developed on similar timescales. Under the criteria used by the Corporate Asset Management Group to assess capital bids the community hub proposals score considerably more than either the Gedling or Newark schemes.
- 9.4 The deferred schemes would go into the ten year unfunded programme and be subject to future bids through the Gateway process.
- 10. Contribution from Rushcliffe Borough Council**
- 10.1 Rushcliffe BC's interest in participating in the West Bridgford Community Hub and making a significant financial contribution is noted above. The potential contribution is some £2M in capital plus additional land to make the site more practical.
- 10.2 The West Bridgford Community Hub offers the Borough Council the opportunity to relocate its customer service centre to a more central location and to provide enhanced service to customers. The wider range of services available at the hub should attract more customers.
- 10.3 Detailed negotiations are continuing over the terms of an agreement with the Borough Council to recognise the nature of the financial contribution and provide appropriate guarantees for the continued service. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property will need to approve the agreements which will need to be put in place with Rushcliffe Borough Council in respect of the new building and the delivery of services from it.
- 11. Contribution from the Youth Support Service**
- 11.1 The Community Hubs will have a particular focus on engaging young people. The Youth Support Service is keen in particular that the West Bridgford Hub

provides the focus for working with young people in the area that it currently lacks.

- 11.2 The service is proposing to cease work at the Cropwell Bishop Youth Centre as the current building is not fully suitable for youth work purposes, is expensive and difficult to maintain, and is not DDA compliant. The area would be better served by a new mobile service that is shortly to be commissioned. However, it is felt that young people in the area would also benefit from access to a “people carrier” which would be able to take them to planned activities elsewhere.
- 11.3 Consequently, it is proposed that the capital value of the existing youth centre should be contributed to the Community Hub budget, less £20,000 for the cost of a suitable vehicle. It is estimated that this represents an addition £130,000 for the project.
12. The capital that this would make available can be summarised as follows:

	£m
Initial allocation	4.55
less Sutton	(0.55)
Delay Newark and Gedling	4.50
Rushcliffe Contribution	2.00
YSS Contribution	0.13
Total	10.63

13. Initial feasibility work gives a reasonable degree of confidence that two community hubs should be achievable to an acceptable standard within this cost envelope.
14. The inclusion of Adult Social Care and Health day services in the Worksop scheme is not funded within this model. Further work is required to establish the requirement for this service. It is proposed that the Worksop scheme is designed in such a way that this service can be added at a later date.
15. The use of the existing Worksop library will also be considered in connection with this project and the rationalisation of space within the nearby Queens Buildings vacated by the Registration Service. Future proposals for these buildings will be brought to the Portfolio holder for Finance and Property.
16. This paper provides extensive detail of the work undertaken to date in respect of the development of the Community Hub concept. The potential benefits of the Community Hub concept in terms of improving the Council’s outward facing services in Worksop and West Bridgford have been established. Although consultation with stakeholders has been limited to date, there are clear opportunities for positive engagement with district council partners. It is

proposed, therefore, that approval be sought to a re-profiling of the capital bids for Library development from 2007/8 onwards in order that both Community Hubs may proceed.

17. The increased size of and enhanced services from the Community Hubs will have revenue implications for the departments concerned. These will need to be contained within the budget portfolios of the relevant services.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. The option of doing nothing would leave the existing libraries in Worksop and West Bridgford in their current inadequate state and would not realise the ambitions set out in the Best Value Review for higher quality public buildings and integrated services.
19. The second option to meet the inadequate capital availability would be to scale down the proposals and replace the existing libraries in Worksop and West Bridgford rather than create multi-agency service points. This would be achievable within the existing budget but misses the opportunity to bring services together and to increase partnership working. This would essentially replace the two libraries on a like-for-like basis but would not increase the size of the libraries to reflect the current level of demands on their services.
20. The third option would be to develop fewer community hubs. The Sutton refurbishment has been completed and it would be possible to develop one of the major community hubs within the existing budget. This would not provide an adequate pilot for the concept. Worksop and West Bridgford provide two different circumstances and give greater scope for testing the concept and identifying lessons from different areas. It would lose economies of scale from a programme of two major builds. The remaining area would continue to be served by a library with inherent shortcomings. Delaying the build of either would probably mean that the cost at a later date would be greater.
21. The option that is recommended is to re-profile the capital programme. Re-profiling the library developments included in the programme for 2007/8 and 2008/9 starts would allow both community hubs to proceed and give a good test of the concept. It would mean that improvements in Gedling and Newark would be delayed. However, there are difficulties with both these schemes and further work is needed on the practicalities before they could be realised.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and Disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That approval be given for the capital programme be re-profiled to defer the approved schemes for Gedling and Newark and increase the budget allocated to Community Hubs, as set out in the report.
2. That approval be given for the development of Worksop Community Hub as outlined in the report.
3. That approval be given for the development of West Bridgford Community Hub, subject to resolution of the matters set out in paragraphs 10.1 and 10.3 of the report.

Coun Chris Baron  
Cabinet Member  
Finance and Property

Coun Steve Carroll  
Cabinet Member  
Culture and Regeneration

### **Legal Services Comments**

The decision falls within the authority of the Council and is a key decision. Once agreed and finalised with Rushcliffe Borough Council, the arrangements in respect of the West Bridgford Community Hub will need to be formalised in one or more legal agreements (as required) in a form approved by the Head of Law and Democracy. Specific legal advice will need to be sought on the form of the agreements. [CEH 08.07.06]

### **Financial Comments of the Strategic Director (Resources) (RWK)**

The County Council's current Capital Programme contains allocations of £4.55M for Community Hubs, £3.5M for Newark Library and £1.0M for the rationalisation of libraries in the Gedling Area. Amalgamating these allocations less the current commitment of £550,000 to the refurbishment of Sutton-in-Ashfield library would give a revised allocation of £8.5M.

Further capital contributions of £2M from Rushcliffe Borough Council and £130,000 from the sale of Cropwell Bishop Youth Centre will increase the total allocation to £10.63M.

It is proposed that the Capital Programme be amended accordingly.

Further reports regarding the detailed capital and revenue implications of the proposed schemes will be presented to future meetings of the County Council/Cabinet.

### **Background Papers Available for Inspection**



Notes of officer workshops to develop the community hub concept

Notes of meeting with Rushcliffe BC on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007

**Electoral Division(s) Affected**

Arnold South

Carlton West

Newark East

West Bridgford Central and South

Worksop West