

CUSTOMERS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - JULY 2010

PLYMPTON LIBRARY REPLACEMENT

BRIEFING NOTE

Background

The temporary library in the Ridgeway opened on 2 February 2009 and has been very successful with increased visitor numbers.

Plans were developed for a replacement library on the former site and following public consultation the preferred option was for a joint library and health facility, including health clinic and GP's surgery. This would be delivered jointly with the PCT through the strategic partnering agreement. The library would be approximately 600m².

However, in February this year, the PCT, as a result of funding pressures, unfortunately had to withdraw from the scheme. The PCT did look into alternative ways of meeting their funding shortfall via the Plympton Hospital site, but this would require approval from the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) which would take several months to obtain.

Alternative options for delivery

The withdrawal of the PCT left the council with a number of less attractive options.

- Delay the scheme until SHA approval is received. However there is no certainty to SHA approval and the delay to the scheme would be 12 months. This would mean PCC extending the lease of the temporary library for a further 12 months at a revenue cost to the Library service of £63,000. There is provision in the existing lease of the temporary library to extend for a further 12 months and both the head lessee and landlord have confirmed approval to this.
- Build a stand alone library with the monies received from the loss adjuster. The size would similar to the original, 300m². A new planning application would need to be developed and the completion on site would not be until spring 2011. This would require a three month extension to the temporary library at a revenue cost in the region of £15,000 to the library service.
- Negotiations had been held with the landlord of the temporary library on the Ridgeway to buy out the freehold. The landlord currently has the security of the head lessee for further period of six years with a guaranteed income equivalent to that currently being paid by PCC for the temporary facility. With this in mind the landlord is in no rush to sell though would consider an offer that reflects the current lease position. This however is well in excess of the capital available from the loss adjuster.
- Look to other potential sources of funding for a replacement joint facility that would deliver a larger library than currently possible with the insurance monies.

Current situation

A combination of the second and fourth options are being pursued at present.

A planning application for a 300m² library has been developed and discussions with planning officers held. Given the earlier planning approval this revised scheme would not require committee approval so could be delivered relatively quickly.

Alternative funding sources are being investigated though this is not straightforward given continuing uncertainty over central government funding.

A further 12 month extension to the temporary library lease is being negotiated with three monthly break options to allow greater flexibility once a final decision is made on the options available.

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