

# REPORT TO CABINET

**REPORT OF: HEAD OF FINANCE**

**REPORT NO: HOF176**

**DATE: 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2011**

|   |   |                                  |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>TITLE:</b>                                     | BOURNE COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT   |                                  |
| <b>KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:</b> | KEY DECISION  |                                  |
| <b>PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION:</b>    | Cllr Mike Taylor<br>Resources   |                                  |
| <b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>                           | R Wyles<br>Head of Finance<br>01476 406210<br>r.wyles@southkesteven.gov.uk  |                                  |
| <b>INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:</b>                 | Carried out and Referred to in paragraph (7) below  | Full impact assessment Required: |
| <b>Equality and Diversity</b>                     |   |                                  |
| <b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:</b>                | This report is publicly available via the Your Council and Democracy link on the Council's website:<br><a href="http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk">www.southkesteven.gov.uk</a> |                                  |
| <b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>                          |   |                                  |

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- the implementation of the Bourne Community Access Point (CAP) project (subject to planning approval)
- the preparation of specifications for the alterations to the Corn Exchange and subsequent award of contracts
- the delegation for the negotiation of lease arrangements to the strategic director (community and environment) in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The proposals for the Bourne Community Access Point (CAP) have undergone extensive negotiation with key partners and the project can now be advanced to the implementation stage should approval be given.

## **3. DETAILS OF REPORT**

Currently, public sector services in Bourne and the surrounding area are delivered by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) and Bourne Town Council (BTC) from a number of locations. The concept of the Bourne CAP is to integrate all of the services from a single joint access point, and the intended location for the delivery is the Bourne Corn Exchange.

The key benefits are:

- Give customers the ability to access a wide range of council services from a single point of access
- Make best use of buildings and resources without compromising on service quality
- Provide an improved customer environment
- Improve opening times including Saturday mornings
- Create a central location in the heart of the town serving the community of Bourne

### Corn Exchange

The Corn Exchange is a community facility in the town centre and is owned and operated by the District Council. A service review of the venue was undertaken in 2010 and this revealed that the centre is under utilised as a venue and was unable to recover its running costs through its hiring income.

The opportunity has been taken to maximise the usage of the asset whilst preserving the Corn Exchange as a venue for hire. Therefore the proposal is to retain the function room for hiring purposes but to convert the remainder of the building in to a community access point on the ground floor and flexible working office space on the first floor. Although the weekly market will remain in its current location, the storage of the stalls will be relocated to an alternative site.

### Funding Model

Preliminary costings for the conversion works are in the region of £160k - £200k. This includes full conversion from the existing use of the building to a multi-service use facility. Capital costs include both the re-modelling of the ground floor accommodation and a first floor conversion to a hot-desking staff area incorporating flexible working space, dedicated offices and shared meeting room. The conversion also includes the incorporation of the existing living accommodation into offices and storage. Discussions with the other partners have confirmed a funding model has been agreed based on contributions towards the conversion costs in proportion to their occupancy and usage requirements. In addition further funding will be made available from the partners in respect of specific fitting out and ICT infrastructure costs. For the Council

£150K for area office upgrades is included in the 2011/12 capital programme and this will be utilised to contribute towards the conversion and the fitting out costs.

The opportunity has been taken to develop a financial model that embraces the potential for shared operational running costs within the context of annual revenue contributions. The contributions from the respective partners will ensure that all partners pay a proportionate amount aligned to their business needs whilst delivering a reduction when compared to current running costs. Negotiations are at an advanced stage and will progress once further detailed understanding of the intended usage is confirmed. The contribution will exclude direct staffing costs and will be reviewed annually to reflect inflation and actual usage.

### Commissioning Model

A number of scenarios have been considered in respect of the operational delivery of the Bourne CAP. The preferred delivery model is commissioning whereby the District Council will deliver both library and customer services. For this to be undertaken the County Council will financially contribute towards the front line staffing costs in respect of the library service and will provide strategic support. This model will enable general customer enquiries are dealt with without the need to transfer them and will ensure staffing resources are maximised.

For customer enquires that are of a specialist nature such as planning, benefits and environmental health, officers from those services will be deployed to the Bourne CAP and will be available to customers. This will improve the customer offer for Bourne and the surrounding area from the current limited service and will create a southern based officer team.

### Flexible office space

The design of the Bourne CAP includes the conversion of the first floor meeting space into a multi functional flexible working environment for county and district council staff. This will promote the use of agile working and enable officers who have a requirement for visits and inspections in the south of the district. This re-configuration of the Corn Exchange will free up space within the offices of Grantham and provides the first step towards the rationalisation of office space across the Council's property portfolio. This proposal will also create the opportunity for other public or voluntary sector partners to utilise the office space and face to face meeting facilities in the future.

### Consultation

In recent weeks, customers using both the library and the area office have been invited to view the proposed plans (appended to the report) and provide feedback on their initial views of both the concept and the design. The vast majority of the feedback has been positive with support for both the concept (particularly sharing costs and hosting in one location) and the design layout with some concern expressed regarding the availability of adjacent parking and the uncertainty regarding the future use of the Town Hall building.

## Next stages

The project is highly complex and involves a number of partners, each with specific requirements, working together to provide a facility that meets the needs of the community and delivers a cost effective service. Should approval be given for the project to proceed, then planning consent will be sought with an aim to begin the building conversion costs in March 2012. It is anticipated that the centre will be open by December 2012.

### **4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The benefits of the Bourne CAP are detailed in the report and include optimising use of assets, sharing resources, improving the customer offer and providing key services. Should the project not proceed then there will be limited opportunities to realise these full benefits.

### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

These are detailed in the report.

### **6. RISK AND MITIGATION**

Should the project proceed, full project management methodology will be utilised and the appropriate risks and issues logs will be maintained and audited.

### **7. ISSUES ARISING FROM EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This will be undertaken as part of the project implementation.

### **8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

N/a

### **9. COMMENTS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**

The financial implications from this project will be incorporated into budgets should approval be given.

### **10. COMMENTS OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

The project requires the cooperation of both the County Council and the District Council working together to deliver a central hub for service delivery. The proposal involves the alteration of the District Council premises and the potential transfer of staff from the County Council to the District Council with the District Council delivering services on behalf of the County Council as its agent. The terms of any agreement relating to the cost of works to be carried out, the potential transfer of resource and the shared use of the facilities to be provided must be determined and agreed in writing before any work is started on the facilities.

As no defined part of the building will be let to the County Council, an agreement to use the facilities with provision for payment and terms of use must be determined.

**11. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICES**

**12. APPENDICES:**

Indicative ground floor plan of Bourne CAP