

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
Date:	25 October 2012
Title:	Fleet Civic Centre Development
Reference:	4187
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to obtain approval for the County Council's land ownership in the centre of Fleet to be considered in a potential project with public sector partners and a private sector retail developer for Fleet town centre and to endorse the continuation of ongoing discussions with the parties involved.

1.2. This paper seeks to

- set out the background to the project, the proposed retail development and the partners involved
- outline the opportunity the development provides for the creation of a new venue for co-located public services, funded through capital receipts from the sale of the land
- provide an update on discussions and feasibility work to date

2. Contextual information

2.1. Along with many high streets in the UK, the prosperity of Fleet town centre is under pressure from changes in the retail mobility of its local population and their changing requirements. In order to promote its vitality and viability, Hart District Council commissioned in 2010 a planning document 'A Vision for Fleet Town Centre 2011-2028'. Amongst a number of elements, this outlined the capacity of the town to support a large retail development at the southern end of Fleet Road, in the vicinity of the civic offices, to act as an 'anchor' that would increase retail footfall and dwell time in the town centre and support other shops.

2.2. In response to this 'Fleet Vision' document, a major retailer has approached Hart District Council regarding the potential to develop a large store on the

combined site of the existing civic offices, Hampshire County Council's library and the Harlington Centre (a community building run by Fleet Town Council). Refer Appendix 1 for a site plan showing Hampshire County Council's asset interest in relation to the wider site. This proposal would see the relocation of the District Council offices to smaller premises elsewhere and the provision of a replacement new-build community hub adjacent to a new town square as a part of the development, with the project funded through the capital receipt from the combined land sale.

- 2.3. As a result of this approach, Hart District Council has asked Hampshire County Council as a landowner of part of the land under consideration to engage in joint discussions with the retail developer and to work in partnership with them and Fleet Town Council to explore the proposal further.
- 2.4. In December 2011 Hart District Council agreed to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with the retail developer to progress discussions and for the developer to provide funding for feasibility work to be carried out for the public sector interests. Using this funding, Hart District Council has appointed HCC Property Services to lead on property and design feasibility work for the community hub, in the context of the development as a whole.

3. The Community Hub

- 3.1. Building on the Hampshire One Public Sector Estate programme and the exemplar precedents of co-location at Havant Public Service Plaza and Ringwood Gateway, this project represents another excellent opportunity to improve the key public sector assets in a Hampshire town centre. A new state-of-the-art community hub would combine the functions of a discovery centre, children's centre, performance venue, café, democratic meeting space and a small shared office, potentially also including a base for the local Safer Neighbourhoods Team of Hampshire Constabulary.
- 3.2. Involving a number of stakeholders, work is progressing to establish the size and feasibility of the community building required, centred on a vision of a single shared venue run collaboratively. The building would offer an environment in which to develop and support an active, thriving and safer community for all the people of Fleet, through working in partnership.
- 3.3. Feasibility work is also examining the overall urban design implications and the integration of both the retail store and the community hub into the townscape, together with a proposed new town square and marketplace.

4. Retail Impact

- 4.1. At their meeting of 6 September 2012, and in response to a number of local trader concerns, Hart District Council's Cabinet approved the engagement of retail consultants to give an up-to-date independent market assessment of the potential impact of the retail element of the project on the town as a whole.
- 4.2. This assessment sits within the wider context of the Government's recent response to the Mary Portas Review ('High Streets at the Heart of our Communities' published by DCLG in March 2012) and its challenge to local

partners to re-imagine their town centres and high streets, ensuring they offer something new and different - an experience that goes beyond retail, with creative use of public spaces and a vibrant economy.

5. Finance

- 5.1. The costs of the project are expected to be met by the retail developer by way of the capital receipt from the combined public sector land sale, including the under-writing of upfront costs of feasibility and pre-planning work.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Feasibility work on the community hub is expected to conclude towards the end of 2012, confirming the size and location of the new building within an overall masterplan for the retail development and the outcome of the independent retail impact assessment. This feasibility work will be the subject of a further report to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources.

7. Recommendation(s)

That the Executive Member for Policy and Resources approves that:

- 7.1. The County Council's land ownership in the centre of Fleet be considered in a potential project with public sector partners and a private sector retail developer.
- 7.2. Continuation of ongoing discussions with the parties involved is endorsed.
- 7.3. The concept of the co-location and collaborative delivery of public services from a combined community hub be supported and actively pursued in principle.
- 7.4. A further report is brought back to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources to consider the details of any subsequent proposals.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. To be developed as part of feasibility work

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. To be developed as part of feasibility work

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

To be developed as part of feasibility work

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

To be developed as part of feasibility work

FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTEES:**OTHER EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:**

Executive Member & Portfolio	Reason for Consultation	Date Consulted	Response
Cllr Keith Chapman	Executive Member for Culture and Recreation	10.10.12	No comments received.

OTHER FORMAL CONSULTEES:

Organisation	Reason for Consultation	Date Consulted	Response
Cllr Wheale	Local Member for Fleet	28.09.12	Member briefed. No comments received.
Cllr Radley	Local Member for Church Crookham and Ewshot	28.09.12	Member briefed. No comments received.
Cllr Glen	Local Member for Odiham	28.09.12	Member briefed. No comments received.
Cllr Simpson	Local Member for Hartley Wintney, Eversley and Yateley West	28.09.12	Member briefed. No comments received.
Cllr Collett	Local Member for Yateley East, Blackwater and Ancells	28.09.12	Member briefed. No comments received.