

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Culture and Recreation
Date:	4 November 2010
Title:	Basingstoke Discovery Centre: Progress report
Reference:	2189
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on progress towards the opening of Basingstoke Discovery Centre.
- 1.2. This paper seeks to
 - confirm that the project is on timetable and on budget
 - update the Executive Member on the different elements that will be included in the Discovery Centre

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Basingstoke Library is Hampshire's third busiest library (after Winchester and Fareham) with over 350,000 visits a year and around 320,000 issues of books, DVDs etc.
- 2.2. The library is located in the Festival Place shopping centre and, having not been refurbished since 1993, it has become very tired looking and dated. Over the last few years there has been a significant investment in Festival Place to extend and improve the shopping centre and the cafés and shops adjoining the library have also improved their image to attract custom, making the library appear even more outdated.
- 2.3. Hampshire's Discovery Centres are recognised along with similar centres across the country as exciting developments providing an opportunity for more people to access in one place a wide range of council services in one place.
- 2.4. The Discovery Centre concept has proved very successful in Gosport and Winchester which opened in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Gosport Discovery Centre has shown a visitor increase of 50% since opening and Winchester Discovery Centre

has increased its footfall by 73% compared to visitors to the former lending and reference libraries. A successful programme of learning and community engagement activity is run at both centres attracting a wide range of local residents. Surveys carried out at Gosport in 2005 and 2006 have shown that the profile of users of the Centre now more closely matches the socio-demographic profile of the local population.

- 2.5. The creation of a Discovery Centre in Basingstoke had been an ambition for a number of years. After exploring a number of options, including developing alternative sites, the decision was taken in late 2008 to develop the site of the existing library in Festival Place into a Discovery Centre.

3. Basingstoke Discovery Centre, its Funding and Targets

- 3.1. The Discovery Centre will consist of -

- A grand new entrance on the ground floor of the shopping centre which opens up to the first floor with artwork from the internationally acclaimed artist Michael Craig Martin.
- A modern, up to date library with wi-fi and places for customers to read, relax and meet friends or to study.
- Self service terminals for customers to issue and return their books etc, freeing up staff time to help with more detailed enquiries.
- A community room, seating up to 50 people which will host activities such as author talks, educational activities and small-scale music performances.
- A dedicated space for regular sensory clinics and other activities for Adult Services clients.
- A personal changing suite for people with serious disabilities and their carers to enable them to visit the Discovery Centre and Festival Place generally.
- Improvements to the lift to provide better access to the Discovery Centre, particularly for customers in large motorised wheelchairs.
- A new help desk to incorporate 'Hantsdirect Local' which will enable customers to enquire about any of the services provided by Hampshire County Council.
- A refurbished Citizens Advice Bureau with improved waiting and interview rooms and more office accommodation for the staff.
- A dedicated museum display case to encourage people to visit the Willis Museum, Milestones and Basing House which are all close by.
- In addition, a successful lottery bid of £241,000 (of which £41,000 is capital funding) will be used to run a three year project called Learning at the Centre. The overall aim is to enable adults with learning disabilities and with physical disabilities to become regular users of the Discovery Centre and take part in a programme of personalised learning activities. Staff in the Discovery Centre will be working with partners like Adult Services and local Advocacy groups, as well as individuals and their carers.

- 3.2. A report setting out the design proposals costing £1,128,000 was considered by the Buildings, Land and Procurement Panel on 23 March 2010 and subsequently approved by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources on 14 April 2010. Since then, a Big Lottery grant of £41,000 to support access improvements has been secured and this has been added to the budget available as shown in Appendix 1.

- 3.3 It is pleasing to report that the project remains on target and within budget. The sources of funding and how this has been allocated over the various elements of the project are shown in appendix 1.
- 3.4. The following targets have been set for the Discovery Centre –
- To increase the number of customers to the Discovery Centre by 5% after two years.
 - To increase the use of the Discovery Centre by vulnerable groups and traditional new library users to more closely reflect the demographic of the library's catchment area. Currently library customers represent 18% of the local population and the aim is to reach 25% after 2 years.
 - To increase use of the Discovery Centre by local businesses.
 - To increase the number of enquiries about County Council Services by 5% over 2 years.

4. Opening Date

- 4.1. At the time of writing this report, it is anticipated that the building will be handed back to the County Council from the main contractor, Raymond Brown Construction Ltd, on 1 November. Staff will then refit the interior with furniture, shelving, books and IT. The opening date has been set for 30 November 2010. This timetable is tight, but staff are working very hard to complete all works in preparation for the Discovery Centre to reopen on time. A range of events and activities are currently being planned for the opening day.
- 4.2. Marketing activity is underway to raise awareness about the new Discovery Centre and encourage new visitors to visit when it is opened. This has included regular updates posted on a blog, twitter and the Hampshire County Council website as well as regular contact with the press.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That progress towards the opening of Basingstoke Discovery Centre on 30 November 2010 be noted.
- 5.2 That the action taken to complete the Basingstoke Discovery Centre on time and on budget be approved.

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

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
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.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1 Equality impact assessment has been considered in the development of this report. A full equality impact assessment of the Discovery Centre programme and of the Basingstoke Discovery Centre has been completed. No adverse impact has been identified and the development will enable and improve access for specific groups. It is expected that the Discovery Centre will have a positive effect on equality and diversity. These are identified in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1 The County Council has a legal obligation under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to consider the impact of all the decisions it makes on the prevention of crime. The proposals in this report have no impact on crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
No impact anticipated.
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?
No impact anticipated.

Capital Expenditure:

Funding for the project has already been approved by the Executive Member Policy & Resources in April 2010. The following tables outline the available funding within which the project has been designed and delivered and how that funding has been distributed across the project:

Table 1 . Sources of Funding:

Financial Provision for Total Scheme	Buildings £'000	Fees £'000	Total Cost £'000
1. From Own Resources			
a) Capital Programme	424	51	475
b) PBRS additional funding	100	0	100
2. From Other Resources			
a) Policy & Resources Capital Repairs Budget	100	0	100
b) CCRA – Self Service	95	0	95
c) Adult Services	112	13	125
d) CCRA – towards cost of Public Art	27	3	30
e) B&D BC – Citizen’s Advice Bureau	111	14	125
f) B&D BC – towards cost of the Community Room	46	6	52
g) Eli Lilley – towards cost of the Business Suite	23	3	26
Total approved April 2010	1038	90	1128
Big Lottery grant towards access improvements secured since April 2010	41	0	41
Total	1079	90	1169

Table 2. Breakdown of expenditure

Capital Expenditure	Current Estimate	Capital Programme
	£'000	£'000
Construction	888	
Furniture and Equipment – see table 3	191	
Fees	90	
Land to be purchased	-	
	1169	1169

Table 3. Breakdown of the budget for Furniture, Equipment and other works.

Type of expenditure	£000
Furniture and Equipment	56
Self Service equipment and furniture	95
Public Art	40
Total	191