

CABINET

27 OCTOBER 2022

RELOCATION OF REDDITCH LIBRARY

Relevant Cabinet Member

Councillor M Hart

Relevant Chief Officer

Strategic Director for People

Local Member(s)

None

Recommendations:

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities recommends that Cabinet:**
 - a) **Notes the proposals for re-locating Redditch Library as part of Redditch's Town Plan Deal;**
 - b) **Approves the set of high-level plans and requirements for the re-location of Redditch Library as set out in the report;**
 - c) **Approves the commencement of formal public consultation on the proposed plans for the relocation;**
 - d) **Authorises the Strategic Director for Commercial and Change in collaboration with the Chief Finance Officer and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, to progress further negotiations with Redditch Borough Council for the commercial arrangements for the proposed library relocation and transfer of the library site to Redditch Borough Council, based on the main heads of terms as set out in paragraph 21; and**
 - e) **Receives a further report, in May 2023, on the outcome of the consultation and the negotiations with Redditch Borough Council.**

Background

2. In June 2021 Redditch secured a historic investment of £15.6 million Town Deal which will help fund ambitious new projects for the town. The funding represents one of the single largest government investments in Redditch since it became a new town in the 1960s

3. The Town Deal is the result of the submission to government through the Towns Fund. The Redditch submission was based on vision for the transformation of the town summarised in the Town Investment Plan

4. The Town Deal is to be progressed through a collaborative approach between the Redditch Town Deal Board (which includes representatives from Worcestershire County Council) and Redditch Borough Council. The priority projects to be funded by the Town Deal have been selected because they will demonstrably boost the productivity and economy of the town, promote innovation and digital transformation, enhance the look and feel of the public areas and provide increased green and connected town centre spaces.

5. The projects to be taken forward are:

- Development of a new digital manufacturing and innovation centre
- Redevelopment of the current Redditch Library site
- Town Centre public realm Improvements

6. A business case for the Town Deal bids is being submitted to central government on 14 October with the outcome expected to be known by the end of 2022.

7. This report focuses on the re-development of the current Redditch Library site which involves the demolition of the existing library building and the delivery of a new public square and associated commercial development. The proposed new square on the site of the library can provide this space in a location which helps to drive footfall to and from the Kingfisher Centre and improving connectivity to the historic town centre core. The proposed new square would stimulate the conversion of the blank surrounding facades, including part of the Kingfisher Centre and the former Royal Hotel, currently operating as a nightclub. In addition, a new café pavilion is proposed to book-end the new square and helps to define the historic street frontage. A total of £4,130,000 has been allocated towards this development.

8. Worcestershire County Council is actively supporting the regeneration of Redditch within its Town Plan and wants to work collaboratively with the Borough Council on the re-location of the existing Library into other suitable premises. Discussions have been taking place with Redditch Borough Council to further develop this plan and approval is sought from Cabinet for the high-level plans and set of requirements for the proposed newly located Library and authorise the commencement of public consultation.

Redditch Library

9. Worcestershire has a total of 21 Libraries, 2 Library Links and a mobile Library which collectively meet the Council's statutory duty of providing a comprehensive and efficient Library Service. Redditch Library serves the second largest catchment population (86,819) behind The Hive (105,312) and ranks 4th out of 21 in deprivation ranking and is the 2nd busiest library in accordance with activity. Worcestershire County Council have operated from the current building c.50 years with the Jobcentre Plus moving in April 2018.

10. Redditch Library is open 52 hours a week across six days (closed on Sunday). It offers the full range of service provision including Adult Learning, Readers' Groups, School Class Visits, Job Clubs, Business & Enterprise support, children's activities, social connecting groups, Library Service at Home, volunteering opportunities, computer access support and much more. The table below summaries the high-level statistics on how Redditch Library is used by the local population.

Redditch Library Statistics

Financial-year totals 2016/2017 to 2021/2022 and for 2022/2023 up to and including 30th September

	2016/2017	2017/2018*	2018/2019	2019/2020†	2020/2021†	2021/2022	2022/2023
Visits	261,028	222,088	275,461	269,777	39,008	143,502	70,936
Members whose Home Site is Redditch	41,296	43,283	45,878	47,912	48,557	50,111	51,184
Active Users (borrowers and computer users)	9,501	9,426	9,246	8,305	5,917	4,465	4,428
Issues - Books	164,251	145,069	138,966	125,033	33,209	89,270	52,870
Issues - Music CDs, DVDs, Spoken Word	3,701	3,143	2,228	1,559	652	1,283	533
Active Borrowers	6,392	5,786	5,638	5,004	1,839	3,193	3,107
Computer Users	5,123	5,083	5,732	4,470	1,350	1,967	1,663
Computer Hours Used	36,072	28,029	29,397	28,773	3,932	10,203	6,827
Computer Hours Used as % of Available Time	26.5	25.3	23.8	23.5	23.2	34.2	23.3
Event Attendees	13,369	10,793	12,053	11,457	--	4,007	4,715

* library closed 26th February to 13th March 2018 inclusive for refurbishments to accommodate Jobcentre Plus

† library closed 24th March until 3rd July 2020 inclusive

Requirements for Library re-location

11. Worcestershire County Council and Redditch Borough Council see the library provision as an important service within the town's offer to local residents and community groups, and want to use this opportunity to further bolster library usage in line with the County Council's approved Library Strategy.

12. To protect the County Council's interests, both commercially and in terms of service offer/statutory responsibilities it is proposed that the following requirements, with the three areas of commercial arrangements, service conditions and collaboration

opportunities, are used with Redditch Borough Council to agree the re-location arrangements.

i) Commercial Arrangements

- The County Council own the current library and its market value will need to be recovered whether that is through a capital receipt, a transfer of an interest with equivalent value, demonstrated increase in community value or a mix of some or all of these, to equate to the market value and comply with best value obligations under the Local Government Act 1972
- The County Council's overall costs/income position cannot be any worse i.e., the County Council will expect to be compensated for any deficit considering current and expected running costs and rental income from third parties.
- The expectation is that the project funding and therefore the business case will demonstrate that all costs to relocate the library and, any other services currently delivered from there, to a new location would be covered by Redditch Borough Council. This will include all associated costs including fit out of the new premises i.e., no additional one off or recurrent costs to the County Council by undertaking this relocation.
- There is no increase in current net premises cost and any surplus generated will be retained but the County Council will take the risk of any future reduction in income generation from third parties
- The long-term future of the Library and its current capital value is protected as part of any future lease arrangements.

ii) Operational/Service Conditions

- The re-located Library floorspace is equal to or of similar size to the current location provided the proposed area can still enable the same offer with no increase in current net premises costs (if the floor area is lower than existing, then corresponding reduced costs and income should still equate to the same net surplus to be generated).
- The alternative premise is within a location that retains current footfall levels (current location benefits from proximity to Kingfisher Shopping Centre) or mitigation of a less central location through an increase in number of co-located service providers.
- There are no barriers to access for customers, volunteers or staff, e.g., access to short term-term parking for couriers and volunteers, access to disabled parking.
- The library is in prominent location, predominantly on the ground floor within a building with a high profile, visible, glazed entrance to provide an attractive 'shop window' from the street.
- An interior space that is modern, open, light and welcoming with the potential to evolve and increase the service offer including the new libraries unlocked delivery model (if appropriate).
- There is no reduction in the current library service offer.

iii) Collaboration Opportunities

- The re-located premise helps facilitate the continuation of a positive working relationship with partners including co-development of services to meet Redditch residents' needs.
- The re-location will allow the continued development of the County Council's Open Library programme which seeks to strengthen libraries as community assets outside core opening hours
- The re-located library to be considered in the context of the wider Redditch Town Centre plan, e.g., are there other developments planned that would impact the desirability of the new library location.
- To have visible design links and directional signage links within public realm space in Redditch Town Centre to integrate the library into the wider town centre scheme and 'lead' residents to the library.
- For the Library to be considered in the context of Redditch & Bromsgrove's plans for the delivery/provision of District Customer Services, including shared reception facilities for the newly proposed community hub.
- Consider the new location that is developed as a community hub through other service co-locations and partnerships.

Proposed re-location plans

13. It is proposed to re-locate Redditch Library from its present site to the Redditch Borough Council Town Hall, as a part of the development of a new community hub with partner agencies. The implementation of this re-location will follow the requirements set out in paragraph 12, which includes being at a cost neutral level to the County Council. This will then free up the former Library site for demolition, repurposing and redevelopment as per the Town's fund bid. This relocation brings with it key benefits including:

- Creative space planning for the purposes of community hub.
- Evolutionary agile flexible space.
- Enhanced town scape that is more attractive and accessible to residents, business and visitors.

14. Feasibility planning for the available space within the Town Hall has been undertaken by Eddisons and AEW Architects, jointly engaged by Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council, in conjunction with Library Services and their tenants. Following detailed requirement scoping, several options were presented proposing how the available space within the Town Hall can be redesigned and utilised to meet service delivery needs. Options reviewed have included extending onto existing balcony areas to maximise available space on the ground floor, as well as creative and flexible use of existing space on multiple floors to minimise additional building works required.

15. Following consideration of the operational service conditions and collaboration opportunities as outlined above, the option proposed utilises space across four floors, including the lower ground floor which allows operational services to be maintained whilst reducing additional costs for extension.

16. At a high level, the plans demonstrate how the refurbishment of the existing Town Hall will be utilised to facilitate a new community 'one stop' offering flexible use to a

variety of occupiers sharing resources where possible. Re-orientation and re-configuration of underutilised spaces and use of the existing building structure offers flexibility and evolution of space. The ground floor entrance will become the focal point to the scheme aided with clear signposting to facilitate ease of use for the wider public and staff, including:

- Ground floor open plan entrance, event and display area including soft seating, front-facing customer displays and refreshments; dedicated library space and shared space
- First floor dedicated library space and shared space
- Second floor further meeting rooms including large council chamber for multi-agency use and shared hot desking space
- Lower ground floor space available to Library Services and partners with access to emergency exit on to street level to meet health and safety requirements and back-office space, as well as storage.

17. In addition to Redditch Library the Community Hub at the Town Hall will also include provision for Redditch Borough Council Civic services, including customer service hub and other public services.

18. Detailed plans are attached within the Supporting Information and show the proposed locations for all shared and dedicated service areas, as well as design objectives and key benefits for each floor, and primary circulation routes which will enhance visibility of services and customer experience.

19. The table below demonstrates the space allocations in square meters comparing the various zones of the library in the current building and new proposed space within the Town Hall. Overall, the space allocation is 11sqm more in the new space, and therefore meets the operations / service condition to provide a space which is of equal or similar size. The only significant loss of space is in Library storage which could be accommodated by reviewing and rationalising stored items and considering use of space in other library buildings such as The Hive for some stored collections.

Identified spaces	Existing Area (sqm)	Proposed Area (sqm)	Variant (sqm)
Library Storage	200	105	-95
Library Meeting Room 1	25	30	+5
Library Meeting Room 2	55	57	+2
Library Meeting Room 3	28	22	-6
Children's	68	75	+7
Fiction	154	220	+66
Business		32	+32
Non-Fiction	107	107	0
Total sqm	637	648	+11

20. Worcestershire County Council Library Services are supportive that the plans demonstrate the available space will be able to meet service delivery requirements, subject to further detailed design work following public consultation.

Proposed commercial arrangements

21. For this “dealer-location” to happen, the County Council will work with Redditch Borough Council to agree a lease and a financial arrangement that meets the requirements set out in paragraph 12. Initial discussions have proposed that the County Council will grant Redditch Borough Council a 125year lease of the library for the creation of a new public square in return for Redditch Borough Council granting a 125year lease of accommodation within the Town Hall, both leases at nil rent. The lease of the Town hall will detail Redditch Borough Council’s responsibility for the full refurbishment costs and Redditch Borough Council will also be responsible for the relocation costs. The County Council’s share of the running costs will be split into three elements:

- a) Sub metered electricity costs for which Redditch Borough Council will cover the cost of installing the meters;
- b) An additional charge for the proportional costs relating to the leased accommodation in the Town Hall to the County Council for heating, rates, and any other services to be agreed; and
- c) A service charge to contribute to the proportional building running costs of the common parts, including building maintenance. A detailed list of what will be included and excluded from Redditch Borough Council’s service charge will be provided and agreed.

To satisfy the principle that the County Council’s overall costs will be no worse off, it is proposed that the total of b) and c) must not be more than currently budgeted for the existing library for equivalent services, and this figure will rise annually on an appropriate price index but will never be more than the actual proportional costs. The County Council will take the risk of increased electric charges under a).

Further details of the agreed proposed commercial terms will be included in the report brought to Cabinet in May 2023.

Formal Consultation

22. Given the scale of change outlined in the section above, formal public consultation is required. This consultation will focus on the rationale for the change, the impact on existing services and service users along with the proposed implementation plans. The public consultation will commence on 07 November 2022 and run for just over 90 days until 24 February 2023 (considering the Christmas and New Year holidays). The methodology used will follow a mixture of online surveys and face to face sessions. 3-dimensional modelling and extensive conceptual design visuals will be available to support public consultation. A copy of the draft consultation document including the survey can be found within the Supporting Information.

Overview and Scrutiny

23. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board will be visiting the current provision and meeting in Redditch on 25 October to discuss the proposals. Feedback from the Board meeting will be provided to Cabinet.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

24. The last full year of income and costs relating to Redditch Library was 2021/22 and **Table 1** below details the premise costs, income and net position compared to budget, with an actual year end surplus of £24k being generated. The 2022/23 budget predicts a net surplus of £22k. but this is before knowing the full impact of rising utility and other building running costs.

Table 1 – premises costs, income and net position

	Budget 22-23 £'000	Actual 21-22 £'000	Variance £'000
Premise Costs *	156	154	(2)
DWP Income	-178	-178	0
Surplus	(22)	(24)	(2)

* Excludes DWP additional cleaning and security costs which passed straight through to DWP

25. Based on the commercial requirements, the costs of relocation will be funded by Redditch Borough Council and the County Council is expecting to be fully compensated for the value of the asset in line with S.123 of the Local Government Act 1972

26. There are 12 staff (8.5 FTE) working from Redditch Library. They would all transfer to the new location. This is not deemed to be a change of terms of conditions if the new location is near the current Library building.

27. There will be additional capital costs to enable the re-location to implement an Open Library approach in Redditch, as well as some additional equipment that will enhance the new facility. These are one off capital costs and can be met from the existing capital programme for Libraries

28. There has been some debate about whether the existing Library Building should be added to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Confirmation was received on 20 December 2021 that the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has made his decision not to list and is minded to issue a Certificate of Immunity from Listing (COI) for Redditch Library.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

29. Joint Impact Assessment Screening has been completed. Further detailed impact assessment was required for Environmental Sustainability Impact with potential impact on efficiencies of the new building and a possible reduction in the carbon footprint of the Library service.

Supporting Information

Appendices (available electronically):

- a) Proposed plans
 - Town Hall Zone Plans: Lower Ground Floor; Ground Floor; First Floor; and Second Floor
 - 3D Exterior Imaging
- b) Draft consultation document
- c) Joint Impact Assessment Screening
- d) Environmental Sustainability Impact Assessment

Contact Points

Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for People) there are no background papers in support of this report.