

Recommendation to Cabinet from Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee of 25 March 2021

Dorchester Office Strategy

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr T Ferrari, Finance, Commercial and Assets

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: John Sellgren, Executive Director, Place

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

1. Agree to the principle of consolidating the Council's office requirements on the County Hall/Colliton Park site as a 'public service civic hub' subject to the Council ensuring that it takes due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
2. Agree to the principle of utilising any surplus space within the County Hall/Colliton Park site for use by third sector and other public sector bodies and to review the possibility to repurpose and refurbish any such assets currently leased to and in use by them for residential purpose or for disposal
3. Agree to retain the Library facility in South Walks House with a Customer Access Point
4. Reaffirms the principle that we are a member-led authority and that local Members should always be consulted on issues affecting their Wards.
5. Agree to the Council seeking planning permission to repurpose South Walks House and South Annexe for residential use through a process of refurbishing or redeveloping the existing buildings whilst retaining the Library facility in South Walks House and a Customer Access Point.

Background Papers

[Minutes of Place and Resources Overview Committee – 25 February 2021.](#)

Extract from draft minutes of Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee – 25 March 2021

Dorchester Office Strategy

The committee received and considered a report of the Corporate Director of Property and Assets, which outlined the Council's proposals for its office estate within Dorchester and how those assets that were considered surplus should be repurposed. It set out for approval, a programme of work with regard to the future use of the Dorchester office portfolio together with a clear action plan with regard to the reshaping and re-purposing of that element of the Estate.

It was noted that the report contained a number of exempt appendices and councillors noted that the committee would need to move into exempt business if there was to be discussion on the contents of these appendices.

A number of points were raised in connection with issues set out in the report, which included reference to the following:

- Energy efficiency of the buildings and funding available in this area
- The need to consider wider issues including the circumstances in other towns in addition to Dorchester, the economy of the towns, staff issues etc.
- Staff travel between Weymouth and Dorchester and links to the climate strategy work
- A point was raised that there was a need for more scrutiny before a decision was taken by Cabinet, however, it was noted that there had been previous consideration by scrutiny including as part of the budget discussions
- The need for consultation with the Dorchester ward councillors before the report was considered by Cabinet and Dorchester Town council and residents
- Reference was made to a separate work stream to the office strategy work, with regard to the Dorset Workplace. Consultation had been undertaken with managers and service areas and it was noted that the workplace was changing which resulted in the council having more offices than required. The report and recommendations provided a route for further work to be taken forward.

It was proposed by A Canning seconded by M Roe

Each recommendation below was considered and voted upon by roll call:

That Cabinet:

1. Agree to the principle of consolidating the Council's office requirements on the County Hall/Colliton Park site as a 'public service civic hub' subject to

- the Council ensuring that it takes due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 **Carried**
2. Agree to the principle of utilising any surplus space within the County Hall/Colliton Park site for use by third sector and other public sector bodies and to review the possibility to repurpose and refurbish any such assets currently leased to and in use by them for residential purpose or for disposal **Carried**
 3. Agree to retain the Library facility in South Walks House with a Customer Access Point **Carried**
 4. Support Places & Resources Overview Committee establishing a task & finish group with a remit to further investigate the repurposing of South Walks House and South Annexe to include the establishment of a hotel and maximising the number and variety of affordable homes **Lost**
 5. Request the team working on the new Local Plan prioritise the production of a Dorchester Town Centre masterplan **Lost**
 6. Reaffirms the principle that we are a member-led authority and that local Members should always be consulted on issues affecting their Wards **Carried**

Recommendation to Cabinet

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3. Agree to retain the Library facility in South Walks House with a Customer Access Point
4. Reaffirms the principle that we are a member-led authority and that local Members should always be consulted on issues affecting their Wards.

At this point in the meeting, the Monitoring Officer noted that the committee was coming up to the 3 hour point and that there would need to be a motion to continue the meeting if required, beyond 3 hours and specify an end time for the meeting.

It was proposed by D Tooke seconded by M Roe

Decision

That the meeting continue beyond 1.00pm but should end by 1.45pm.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted original recommendation 3, as set out in the officer report, with regard to the need to seek agreement for planning permission in connection with South Walks House and South Annexe for residential use.

It was proposed by M Parkes seconded by M Roberts

Recommendation to Cabinet

5. Agree to the Council seeking planning permission to repurpose South Walks House and South Annexe for residential use through a process of refurbishing or redeveloping the existing buildings whilst retaining the Library facility in South Walks House and a Customer Access Point.