

## **For Information Only – Yeovil Advice Hub**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide some background and a progress report on SCC led plans for a multi-agency advice hub serving Yeovil

### **Recommendation**

That members note the report which is for information only.

### **Background**

SSDC pioneered One Stop Council Shops in the late 1990s. These have been successful in their own terms but did not have the benefit of modern IT to optimise customer/operator access to all SSDC services. It has been a continuing ambition of SSDC, spanning well over 10 years, to create a truly effective multi-agency advice hub in Yeovil, serving the whole community. Our largest town has the highest concentrations of people facing multiple disadvantage (IMD data). The ambition has been to ensure that vulnerable people with complex needs get timely and comprehensive support.

To a limited extent Petters House has evolved and fulfilled this role, although it has 3 separate SSDC reception desks and a “revolving door” of partners offering their services from the building.

### **Transformation and New Opportunities**

With our Transformation programme underway, to remodel our customer service and optimise electronic access to services and customer records, this ambition is as relevant and pressing as ever.

Over the last 2 years SCC has been developing new types of multi-agency hubs across the County, as part of his property rationalisation plan, examples include Glastonbury, Shape at Shepton Mallet, as well as the creation of the shared back office facilities at Brympton Way.

At the time of releasing a floor at Brympton Way SSDC Councillors were clear that this, largely back office facility, was not a substitute for a better town centre advice and service hub.

Yeovil Library has become the focus of feasibility work by SCC to develop a proper one stop advice & service centre, with Petters House being the possible location for other multi-agency services that need a town centre location. Liaison with SSDC has involved Laurence Willis AD from a property angle and Helen Rutter AD looking at the service delivery aspects of community offices in liaison with the Transformation Team.

SCC has submitted a bid to a Government sponsored property rationalisation programme, One Public Estate round 4 (OPE 4), seeking feasibility and project management funding of £450k towards the development of further integrated hubs (3 types: Back Office; Customer & Operational; Business Incubation) across the county, releasing surplus property for housing

or workspace. The outcome of this bid will be known very soon in September 2016. The key features from an SSDC perspective are:

- A Yeovil proposal to deliver a shared customer hub at the existing Library building, with Petters House providing complementary additional capacity for customer, operational and back office requirements. This is described in the bid as an *Integrated Services and Business Incubator Hub campus* releasing up to 5 buildings for new uses
- Across the 2 town centre sites feasibility will be assessed to deliver Library, Registrars, key District Council services, Police, Jobcentre Plus, family support, health visitors, CAB and community & public health services
- SCC has bid for £45k to do the feasibility and project management. The project overall is led by SCC. A meeting is being held by SCC to discuss the outcome of the bid on 26 September. **A separate Project Board will develop the Yeovil Hub**
- SSDC have given an indication of the type of facilities and operating environment that would be needed if we are to operate a customer service from the library
- To date there has been no discussion about the package of services that could run from Petters House, but members are aware that there is surplus space within the building and the Police are interested in locating some of the Neighbourhood Policing team at this building to facilitate One Team activity
- **SCC has stated in the bid that they would aim to have the feasibility/business case and concept designs completed in 6 months, by March 2017. Subject to this phase, the implementation phase for the project is envisaged to be completed over the following 12 months, by end of 2017/18 year. From an SSDC perspective we will need the Hub to align with our own Transformation Programme**
- Similar proposals are set out for a Chard Hub within the bid but on a slower timescale

### **Issues and Next Steps**

Further discussions will be held with SCC and other agencies once the outcome of the bid is known. This will establish the suitability of the 2 buildings for the possible package of services envisaged. It will also establish the commitment of the main parties to a fully integrated service hub.

If the Library proves unsuitable for SSDC's needs and/or agreement cannot be reached then SSDC can revert to a revamp of Petters House to meet our customer service delivery priorities, which may include a town centre workspace hub.

### **Financial Implications**

#### **Corporate Priority Implications**

The Corporate Plan 2016/17 identified a priority project of Working with Partners on a Public Sector Hub for Yeovil.

#### **Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)**

The advice hub, if implemented, could reduce the need for the public to travel out to Brympton Way and so reduce car / taxi journeys.

#### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

A town centre advice hub is likely to be more accessible to the public especially for those with multiple advice and support needs.

#### **Background Papers:**