

# **One Public Estate Programme – Proposals for South Somerset Advice Hubs (For information)**

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## **Purpose of the Report**

To make the Committee aware of the One Public Estate Programme (OPE). To inform members of the proposals and approach to develop feasibility studies to support the creation of multi-service hubs with partner agencies in Chard and Yeovil.

## **Public Interest**

In July 2016 in partnership with Somerset County Council (SCC), other local authorities, Health and the emergency services; a countywide submission was made as part of the LGA and Cabinet Office run One Public Estate Programme to develop a shared asset programme within Somerset. The bid had a focus on the following:

- Creating customer hubs for local public sector/third sector partners
- Creating back office hubs for local public sector/third sector partners
- Creating business incubator hubs
- Regenerating the surplus public estate

The bid was successful and funding has been allocated to the Partnership to develop shared asset proposals across Somerset. Part of that funding has been allocated to SSDC to develop feasibility studies to support the creation of multi-service hubs in Chard and Yeovil focusing on the Holyrood Lace Mill and Petters House as potential venues. This report provides information about the programme and details the approach to be taken in South Somerset with a particular focus on Chard.

## **Recommendation**

That the Committee notes and supports the approach being taken to establish the viability of a multi-agency hub in Chard.

## **Background**

The national One Public Estate (OPE) Programme is an initiative managed by the Cabinet Office Government Property Unit (GPU) and Local Government Association (LGA) to provide support and funding to local authorities to deliver ambitious, property focussed programmes in collaboration with central government departments and other public sector partners. The Somerset OPE Partnership has been working to pilot a blueprint for a new, more integrated approach to shared hubs and customer service in Somerset. Wherever possible, hubs will be located in existing, high quality, public sector buildings located conveniently for customer access. Although, it is recognised that investment in internal remodelling to create the appropriate welcoming space will be required. Somerset's hub programme aims to not only transform assets, but also to provide a catalyst for service transformation and integration. The overriding hub design principles are; affordability, flexibility, efficiency and sustainability. The customer service aim is to provide a seamless and effective first point of contact for customers, irrespective of organisational boundaries.

The opportunity in Chard focusses on the existing five-floor Grade 2 Listed Holyrood Lace Mill. The building currently has 2 vacant floors and capacity in other occupied areas. The feasibility will assess the possibility of rationalising the public sector estate within the town, plus the associated financial benefits and alternative uses on existing sites. The project could see the co-location of a range of public sector organisations and activities so that customer access to services is improved, and will enable public sector partners to work more collaboratively. It is anticipated that a hub could include the existing housing and benefits advice service, registrars, and library with other services such as police, family support, health visitors, public health services and planning/technical services. A work hub to support and incubate new business enterprises with a focus on creative industries is also planned. It is expected that at least 3 existing public sector assets will be made surplus or available for other use.

## **Proposed Approach**

SCC has taken the overall lead in the OPE Programme Management and in December 2016 it was agreed that a Project Manager from SCC would manage the overall development of both projects in South Somerset. Nena Beric will be working with SSDC over the next 18 months and will be based in Yeovil and Chard for some of her time. By appointing one project manager for both projects it is hoped that South Somerset's projects will achieve some consistency, whilst retaining an emphasis on the needs of the local community. Nena will work closely with SSDC's Transformation team to ensure that the final proposals align with the future vision for SSDC. It is recognised that the property needs of all partners is dynamic and dependent on a wide range of national, regional and local, economic and policy decisions. It is therefore important that there is sufficient flexibility within the programme to accommodate the changing needs of partners.

The objectives are for the Project Manager to develop viable proposals for hubs in Chard and Yeovil which are acceptable to SSDC members and other key stakeholders. This will be achieved using a robust project management approach with Business Case production, approval and sign off. This approach provides a process for approval which is flexible and scalable along with a range of tools that can be applied to provide clarity in the decision support process. The approach also provides a clear audit trail for public accountability.

The approach will be as follows:

Chard - Short term (February – May 2017)

- Early SSDC stakeholder engagement including report to Area West Committee – Mar 2017
- Baseline data gathering to gain an understanding of the 'as is' position (what SSDC and partners currently deliver and how) – Mar 2017
- Engagement of key public sector partners – Apr 2017
- Identifying and developing arrangements for service synergies (grouping together complementary services) – Apr 2017
- Develop an outline feasibility report and cost benefit analysis – May 2017

It is anticipated that the outline feasibility report and recommendations will be added to the agenda and shared with the Area West Committee in the late spring. This report will also contain a list of medium and longer term tasks however it is anticipated once a strategic route is agreed a full business case and impact assessment will be developed in the summer for a decision.

## **Project Governance arrangements**

There will be clear lines of reporting and an operational OPE Project Board will be established with clear terms of reference. It is anticipated this Board will meet monthly. Within SSDC the project governance arrangements will align with those for the Transformation project.

## **Financial Implications**

A full cost benefit analysis will be undertaken as the feasibility study for each area develops, and will be reported back to the committee at the relevant time. The expected benefits however are as follows and will be delivered over a 10 year period:

- Savings in property running costs
- Savings in service delivery achieved through shared triage and service design
- Inward investment to Yeovil and Chard
- Regeneration benefits to Yeovil and Chard town centres

## **Council Plan Implications**

A priority project in the 2016/17 Corporate Plan

## **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

None at this stage

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

A town Centre multi agency hub should be well placed to better meet the needs of all sectors of the population

## **Background Papers**

None

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