

Property Rationalisation Programme

Date: 7th March 2024

Corporate and Resources Scrutiny committee



Somerset
Council

Background

- An update on progress with projects included in Phase One of the Property Rationalisation Programme was provided to Scrutiny Committee in September 2023.
- Feasibility studies have now concluded, viability confirmed and recommendations made.
- Executive Key Decision currently being consulted on.
- Detailed staff data produced and analysed to provide reassurance that the proposals will still provide adequate accommodation for our staff.
- When considering the viability of projects in Yeovil and West Somerset, a variety of financial information including indicative capital receipts, current running costs, condition and future maintenance liabilities, as well as likely commercial interest in each of the properties was considered.
- Project costs have been indexed to Q3 2024 prices to provide a degree of reassurance to mitigate risk of rising market costs.

Matters to discuss

Members are asked to note and comment on the following recommendations, the first three of which are contained within a Key Decision report currently under consultation;

1. Relocate services from Petters House, Yeovil to Yeovil Library
2. Relocate services from Williton Childrens Centre, Williton Library and Beckett House to West Somerset House
3. Fund capital works to make layout changes to Yeovil library and West Somerset House to facilitate the co-location of services and delivery of running cost savings. (Capital costs are within existing capital budget approval).
4. Proceed with marketing and sale of C Block, County Hall

Petters House/Yeovil Library



Detailed design and costing undertaken which has shown that the library is a viable location to create an integrated customer service delivery solution. This will allow customers to access all council services from a single site in Yeovil Town Centre.

Additional services operating from the library will not be affected and there will be no reduction in library book stock.

New interview rooms will be constructed on the ground floor of the library to assist with confidentiality.

Yeovil Library has recently undergone a nationally recognised decarbonisation scheme meaning the building is energy efficient and supports our climate change commitments. It has a DEC B rating. Petters House is currently a C rating and requires significant backlog maintenance.

Staff and public consultation undertaken.

West Somerset Review



Detailed design and costing undertaken which has shown West Somerset House to be a viable location for co-located services in a single site in Williton.

West Somerset House is significantly under-utilised which allows opportunity to reconfigure the layout of the building to accommodate the library, registration service and children's centre on the ground floor with no loss of delivery space from existing space provision.

Opportunity to provide leased space to tenants currently operating from Beckett House. Beckett House operates as an enterprise centre, but currently runs at a loss.

Recommendation would enable Asset Management Group to delcare 3 sites in Williton surplus which will deliver capital receipts and revenue savings.

West Somerset House and Beckett House both have DEC C ratings, the Children's Centre has a D rating. We do not have DEC for Williton Library but do have condition survey information.

Potential to dispose of library, children's centre and land between as a single plot for disposal and/or development. Feasibility study will be commissioned to inform best marketing approach.

Seahorse Centre, Minehead is in the process of being sold to Avon and Somerset Police with completion expected mid March 2024. The site will house a police enquiry office, neighbourhood team and provide touchdown desks for response officers. The sale includes a leaseback at peppercorn rent to Somerset Council to provide a satellite health and social care training facility as part of the wider LUF funded Somerset Academy for health and social care training.

C Block County Hall

Detailed analysis of staff data has confirmed that there is no requirement to retain C Block. Occupancy data shows that staffing requirements can be met within the rest of the campus. Occupancy data contained in slide 8.

Work has been undertaken to understand how C Block can be separated from the remaining campus.

Sale of the whole site is not likely to deliver significantly more value than sale of parts.

Considerable interest in C Block . Discussion well developed regarding potential to deliver Key Worker accommodation on the site.

Pre-sales condition survey & architectural advice has been obtained and the property is ready for market.

Proposal is to include the land to the front of C Block to form a wider parcel of land for potential development.



Alternative Options considered

Yeovil

No other viable options were identified within Yeovil Town Centre. Brympton Way is not considered a suitable customer service delivery site due to its out of town location which is not served by public transport.

West Somerset

The alternative option considered in West Somerset was to vacate West Somerset House, retain the Library, Children's Centre and Beckett House, relocating services to those buildings. This option was discounted for a number of reasons;

- It would require the council to manage 3 buildings in Williton rather than one
- Independent market advice suggests there is limited market interest in the area for a property the size of West Somerset House
- West Somerset House is large enough to co-locate services on one site, in a building that benefits from income from tenants, is in better condition and has flexibility to meet future operational business requirements in the area.

C Block, County Hall

Sale of the whole campus has been considered and independent advice sought which confirms sale of the whole site is not likely to deliver significantly more value than sale of parts.

We are still in the process of analysing staff data and working with Ways of Working and Organisational Development teams to form a strategic view of accommodation requirements/needs for the future Council. Until this work is complete, we cannot be sure of the need for some of the campus, however, current data provides confidence that C Block will not be required.

Space & occupancy

	Capacity (desks)	Occupancy (Sept. 23)		Occupancy (Dec. - Jan. 23)		Meeting Rooms	
		Average	Maximum	Average	Maximum	Small / Medium (1-10)	Large (11+)
Taunton County Hall - A	458	98	147	n/a	n/a	12	6
Taunton County Hall - B	722**	116	174	163	232	28	9
Taunton County Hall - C	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1
Taunton Deane House	289*	35	64	56	110	12	3
Yeovil Brympton Way	288*	66	103	71	108	15	6
Bridgwater House	235**	107	143	95	131	18	4
Shepton Shape Mendip	366	67	94	49	74	14	3
<i>Note – total Taunton</i>	1,469	253	394	219	342	52	20

* Deane House and Brympton Way capacity excludes areas let to tenants but includes capacity of areas currently unused.

** County Hall B Block and Bridgwater House capacity excludes areas let to NHS, Homes in Sedgemoor and other tenants; B Block includes space available in B3 (currently mothballed).

One public estate update

Detailed discussions ongoing with One Public Estate partners to identify co-location opportunities.

- Heads of terms agreed for occupation of 70 desks and 30 parking spaces by Somerset Foundation Trust at Bridgwater House
- Ongoing conversations regarding opportunities/requirements in Taunton, Yeovil and Shepton Mallet
- Further update to be provided to scrutiny in due course