

The Highland Council
Resources Committee – 25 May 2016

Agenda Item	13
Report No	RES 31/16

Relocation of Grantown Library

Report by Director of Finance

Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to amend the Capital Plan to include expenditure to relocate the Grantown Library to the Courthouse. The cost of borrowing will be more than offset by savings on rental payments.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Grantown Library is currently located in the YMCA/Community Centre building in Grantown. Discussions have been ongoing for some time to relocate the Library to the Courthouse where the Service Point is located.
- 1.2 The Courthouse is an iconic building and is central to the community of Grantown on Spey in heritage terms as the cornerstone of the 18th century planned town square.

2. Discussion

- 2.1 The Courthouse is currently underutilised, and this move would bring the building back in to full use.
- 2.2 Moving the Library from its current location into the Service Point (which is located on the ground floor of the Court House) will ensure the sustainability of both the Library and Service Point, and will provide an improved and better integrated service to the local community.
- 2.3 The proposal would mean an improvement in the quality of service provision as there have been ongoing repairs issues with the existing building. Access would be improved by the proposed move. Access issues have recently been raised by the Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel. However the support and hard work of the YMCA Board/Community Centre in facilitating the retention of the Library over the years should be recognised.
- 2.4 Provision of access to services, information, public access, internet and wifi for more than the current two mornings a week will be vital in ensuring that current barriers to accessing these services are removed.

- 2.5 By integrating the Library and Service Point, the Courthouse will once again be the civic and administrative focus of the town and will become a central hub for the community.
- 2.6 Council staff currently located on the ground floor of the Courthouse will be accommodated upstairs with room moves. This will result in the whole of the lower floor becoming the Library/ Service Point, with a small meeting room, and the building coming back into full use.
- 2.7 This proposal has the full support of local members, and was also supported by the Customer Services Board in 2015.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The estimated cost of moving the Library into the Courthouse is £0.165m. Various options for the Courthouse have been examined, including the wider restoration of the building. This cost is the minimum possible to create an open plan operational space on the ground floor of the Courthouse.
- 3.2 The nature of this expenditure results in a significant enhancement to the current building, and therefore will be treated as capital expenditure. Borrowing costs associated with this expenditure are estimated at £0.016m.
- 3.3 The relocation will result in revenue savings of £0.018m due to rental payments no longer being made. This sum will be vired to the Loans Fund budget and will result in a small saving to the Council of £0.002m.
- 3.4 In terms of a project assessment, the proposals do not generate any material financial saving or significant return in terms of the capital investment. Nevertheless the proposal can be considered in light of the wider non financial benefits as outlined in Section 2 above.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Rural – the proposal provides an enhanced facility within Grantown on Spey to benefit the local community.
- 4.2 Equalities – the proposal provides improved access to the Library facility.
- 4.3 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – the proposal will result in a more effective use of buildings within Grantown and have a positive impact on carbon emissions.
- 4.4 Resource – these are set out in Section 3 above.
- 4.5 Gaelic, Legal and Risk – there are no specific issues to highlight.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider the proposal and:-

- 1) agree to adjust the Capital Plan to include expenditure of £0.165m to allow this project to proceed;
- 2) agree to vire the sum of £0.018m from the Care and Learning budget to the Loans Fund budget to fund the cost of borrowing as outlined in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 above.

Designation: Director of Finance

Date: 13 May 2016

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Background Papers: None