

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 16 AUGUST 2010

ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

Report by: Hélène Rossiter, Head of Performance & Administration

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the progress being made to secure a new National Park headquarters in shared premises with New Forest District Council (NFDC) at Lymington Town Hall and the implications of the latest funding decisions by Defra.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Authority's occupation of South Efford House has only ever been a temporary arrangement. The temporary planning permissions have been renewed twice, with the current consent expiring on 31 December 2011.
- 2.2 The search for permanent headquarters has been ongoing since 2005. Various options and sites were considered over that period. Early specifications for the accommodation highlighted the important requirements for the NPA's new office space as:
- Within the NP area or a gateway close to it
 - Flexible, open plan office space for up to 80 staff
 - Reception area with space for the public to view planning applications
 - BREEAM rating of 8
 - Excellent business image – projecting modern, professional image
 - Sufficient parking for officers
- 2.3 NFDC have been developing an agenda for the more efficient use of their own office accommodation and an approach was made to the Authority in August 2009 to explore the concept of developing accommodation for the NPA at Lymington Town Hall.
- 2.4 NFDC advised that this option would allow the Council to relocate a significant number of their Lymington staff to Lyndhurst without having to build a new office at Appletree Court (ATC) and that whilst it would be necessary for NFDC to retain staff at the Town Hall, a significant amount of floor space would become surplus to NFDC requirements.
- 2.5 The Lymington Town Hall offer includes the 3 storey front part of the building and use of the Council Chamber, with NPA signage to the front of

the building to give the Authority a strong corporate identity and presence in the town.

2.6 All parties agreed that there were a number of potential benefits to the NPA in co-locating with NFDC at the Town Hall which include:

- considerable cost saving compared to new build
- no need for planning permission
- more sustainable location than South Efford with easy access to the town centre
- could be achieved relatively quickly
- benefits to both organisations that would accrue from a shared facility, including the development of shared services.

2.7 All available options were reported to and considered by Members at the Authority meeting on 24 September 2009, with Members voting strongly in favour of shared premises at the Town Hall, agreeing that it was the most logical and pragmatic option and the best use of resources.

3 Defra Approval and Funding

3.1 As reported to the Authority meeting on 10 December 2009, Defra approved the Outline Business Case for co-location at the Town Hall in November 2009 and funding was approved to progress the re-design of the Town Hall. This business case included the need for some significant refurbishment to the town hall 3 storey building to render it suitable for the National Park to move to. Example works included external and roofing works, replacement windows, structural changes to internal layouts and a new reception/entrance.

3.2 In March 2010 Defra confirmed by letter that funding would be available in 2010/2011 for both the relocation and capital costs.

3.3 The initial funding position of £4.1m has been subsequently revised, firstly to £1.8m and more recently to an approved figure of £0.75m. This has obvious implications for the scope of the work that is able to be carried out.

3.4 The impact of the reduction in funding can be seen in the table below. This summarises some key areas of renovation and refurbishment at each funding point. Major areas of work will have to be de-scoped at the latest funding level. This includes any external work e.g. to roof, drain pipes etc, any structural changes to open the office space out, any alterations to windows, blinds and doors, and any alterations to the existing entrance and reception area. In essence, only cosmetic works are able to be carried out at the £0.75m funding point.

	£4.1m	£1.8m	£0.75
Structural work to make office open plan	In scope	Partially in scope	Out of scope
New WCs and showers	In scope	Refurbishment only	Refurbishment only
Alterations and structural works to entrance and developments of a shared reception area	In scope	External works out of scope Internal works in scope	Out of scope
New windows and blinds	In scope	In scope	Out of scope
New doors and partitions	In scope	In scope	Out of scope
New kitchens/tea points	In scope	In scope	Reduced scope
Cosmetic work (painting, flooring etc)	In scope	In scope	In scope
Separate metering	In scope	In scope	In scope
Heating system replacement	In scope	Out of scope	Out of scope
Lift replacement and refurbished stairwell	In scope	Out of scope	Out of scope
IT installation and wiring	In scope	In scope	Reduced scope

3.5 The following table gives the top level view of how the funding would have been assigned to major areas of the refurbishment at each funding point, showing the significant reductions in the latest £750k estimate. Please note, this is not an exhaustive table of costs and does not include fees and smaller items of work.

£k	£4.1m	£1.8m	£0.75
Ground floor	701	432	205
First floor	683	453	186
Second floor	699	390	182
Reception area	537	111	0
Window replacement	223	211	0
Roofing works	172	12	0
External works	199	0	0
BREEAM enhancements	186	0	0
Biomass boiler	697	0	0

4 Other options

4.1 The new scope, based on the reduced funding position, significantly reduces the specification that will be able to be achieved at Lymington Town Hall. In order to ensure the National Park is moving to a premise that offers the best possible specification for the funding available it is possible that other options could be reconsidered. The original business case laid out a variety of options available to the National Park for its relocation. These included new build, utilisation of existing office/building space within the park boundary or leasing of office space outside the park boundary.

- 4.2 Notwithstanding the above point, it is important to note that the funding available from Defra is required to be spent in the 2010/11 financial year. Investigating other options would be likely to exceed this timescale. In addition it is important to revisit the benefits moving to Lymington Town Hall affords both the National Park Authority and the District Council as well as the taxpayer, opportunities for shared service working being only one of these.

5 Additional contributions

- 5.1 Based on the revised funding of £0.75m, minus current commitments for outstanding invoices to date, the remaining budget available for the project is £0.59m.
- 5.2 The reduced scope based on this funding position means some key, major works cannot be completed. However, Members are asked to consider if it would be appropriate to utilise existing reserves to achieve a higher specification. These considerations need to be made whilst keeping in mind the expected reserve position of the Authority over the coming financial years. Example elements of the project, now out of scope but of critical importance to achieving an open plan working environment with provision of an entrance/reception area that offers space and creates a professional, pleasant and modern image include:
- a) Replacement of windows – estimated cost of £211k
 - b) Removal of some internal non-structural walls – estimated cost of £20k
 - c) Works to create a shared entrance/reception area – awaiting costings and also dependent on scale of work required
 - d) Individual entrance for NPA – estimated cost of £40k
- 5.3 Further, it is possible that items out of scope not possible within the new funding position could be considered at a future time, incorporating small improvements within financial plans for future years. This would however, necessitate decision making of priority to be made against other draws on budget.

Recommendation:

- 1. That Members note the new funding position.**
- 2. That Members agree to proceed with the option of relocating to the Lymington Town Hall based on the new scope of works.**
- 3. That Members consider the possibility of utilising available reserves to extend the scope of works.**

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