

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

22 JUNE 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

PROPOSED PURCHASE OF BRIDGEND TOWN CENTRE POLICE STATION

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the progress that has been made on a potential purchase of Bridgend Town Centre Police Station at Cheapside with a view to support the aspirations of Bridgend College to relocate their main campus to the Town Centre, and to seek approval to progress with a grant funding application to Welsh Government (WG) to support the proposed acquisition and future demolition of the Police Station building.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- ***Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 - ***Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - Working with our partners, including the people who use our services to take steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. We will support individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 BCBC have recently undertaken a comprehensive masterplanning exercise for Bridgend Town Centre. The Regeneration Masterplan identifies a series of ambitious and deliverable projects for the next 10 years that will support future economic growth and secure greater benefits and opportunities for Bridgend Town and the County Borough.

- 3.2 BCBC has been working collaboratively with key public and private stakeholders to ensure that we have a suit of deliverable projects which have a transformational impact on the Town.
- 3.3 Officers have been working alongside Bridgend College to support their aspirations to transform their learning environment which began with their Strategic Outline Programme identifying the need for modernisation of the College's Cowbridge Road main campus through WG's 21st Century Schools programme. After an extensive consultation, the consensus was reached that to enhance the deliverability of educational outcomes for the College it was essential that Cowbridge Road be effectively split into two schemes, a new STEAM academy (centre for Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) at the Pencoed Campus which in turn created an opportunity to review their Cowbridge Road campus for the purposes of their learning and skills programme.
- 3.4 Over the last two years Bridgend College have engaged land and development consultants to consider their options for further development.
- 3.5 In considering this, one option explored was to relocate the provision to the Town Centre, following the principles of WG's town centre first policy, to consider relocating and investment in services and buildings within town centres wherever possible, before the consideration of out of town sites.
- 3.6 In tandem, discussions with South Wales Police (SWP) surrounding their decision to consolidate their offices at their Cowbridge Road site, indicated that the Police Station at Cheapside would potentially become vacant from March 2022.
- 3.7 Through the Masterplanning exercise, the re-development of the Police Station site has therefore been identified as one of the key deliverable regeneration sites. At just 0.2 miles from Pen-y-Bont Train Station, there are considerable opportunities to promote active travel and the use of public transport to the site.
- 3.8 A significant amount of massing and feasibility work has been carried out by Bridgend College to ensure that the scale of aspirations and requirements for a relocation of the College to this site could be met, should the financial case be successful to support the project.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 This is a proposed joint regeneration scheme between Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and Bridgend College to redevelop a strategically located site within Bridgend Town Centre.
- 4.2 The relocation of Bridgend College's Learning and Skills Campus to the Town Centre would act as an anchor project, creating a new and modern environment for study within the Town. It would contribute significantly to the economy, from daily student and staff footfall bringing increased spend for local businesses and demand for additional services and infrastructure.

- 4.3 The project forms an integral part of the wider BCBC ambition for the regeneration of the Town Centre and is the result of an extensive period of discussion with both BCBC, Bridgend College and SWP.
- 4.4 In April this year Bridgend College took a Strategic Outline Proposal (SOP) to Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme Investment Panel for consideration to be elevated into its current Band B programme. This was successful, and the College are now progressing discussions with their governing body to invest in the detailed development and design stage for a Town Centre campus.
- 4.5 In addition to the required space to deliver their teaching programme, the key elements of the College scheme will provide;
- Spaces for studios and compact campus rooms as of part of Bridgend College Learning and Skills campus;
 - Proposed enterprise action hub;
 - Flexible space for performing arts and culture connected to the public plaza at Cheapside.
- 4.6 The project has been programmed to be undertaken in two phases with the first phase proposed for later this year.
- 4.7 The proposal is for BCBC to acquire the current Police Station site at Cheapside and to demolish the existing building, with the aim of leasing the site to Bridgend College via a long term lease. This will enable the relocation of the remaining education provision at Bridgend College's Cowbridge Road campus to the Town Centre.
- 4.8 BCBC will take the lead of the first phase of works (site acquisition and demolition) with Bridgend College leading on phase 2 (site development).
- 4.9 In discussion with WG a purchase by BCBC in the first instance is a preferred option in order to secure the site and to retain its ownership within the public sector with a view to direct regeneration and investment opportunities and to avoid developer-led land banking. Whilst its clear intent is to deliver a site for the College, the proposed acquisition of the site by BCBC would ensure that should the College redevelopment not be forthcoming for any specific reason that the site remains within public ownership and viable for regeneration purposes.
- 4.10 Officers have progressed tripartite discussions with Bridgend College and SWP in respect of the sale and purchase of the site. In order to progress the acquisition the parties required a market valuation of the property in accordance with the Land Transfer Protocol and jointly commissioned a District Valuation. Such report has provided a land value of £650,000 and therefore sets the purchase price at this level. All parties concur with the value reported.
- 4.11 To progress the first phase of the work, a grant from WG's Transforming Towns programme is being sought. The grant will support the proposed acquisition of the freehold title, to regenerate an urban vacant site, to demolish the building and to secure and make good the site.

Next steps

- 4.12 Subject to Cabinet authorisation officers will continue to engage with WG alongside a submission of a grant funding application to their Regeneration Capital Investment Panel.
- 4.13 Subject to the approval of the grant application, work will be progressed in order to finalise the heads of terms and associated legal agreements to progress the proposed acquisition of the site from SWP.
- 4.14 SWP have a target date for vacating the Cheapside premises as at March 2022, however have indicated that a further period of occupation may be required in order to facilitate the smooth transfer of operations to their newly developed offices at their Headquarters site. Subject to Cabinet authorisation a purchase of the site would be undertaken linked to the SWP timescale in order to secure, with provision made to provide a lease back to SWP should a short period of additional occupation be required.
- 4.15 In tandem with pursuing the legal arrangements for the proposed acquisition of the site it has been agreed to begin drafting a long term lease arrangement with the College to secure the site for their redevelopment and satisfy conditions around the same relating to their 21st Century Schools funding.
- 4.16 Officers are continuing to work with SWP to identify and progress a smaller satellite office within the Town Centre to accommodate a day to day police presence.
- 4.17 It is the intention that officers will report back to Cabinet in due course to provide a progress update and to seek any further authorisation that may be necessary as matters progress.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The proposals will not have an impact on the BCBC's policies or procedures.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 An initial EIA screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, no socio-economic disadvantage or negative impact on the promotion of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment based on the 5 ways of working has been considered and there are no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of wellbeing goals/objectives.
 - Long term – Investment in a modern and inspiring learning campus for higher and further education in Bridgend will support the aspirations of young people for many years to come. As a strategically located development site within the tTown

Centre the development in an investment in the transformation on the Town's economy.

- Prevention – Following SWP's intended vacation of their site in March 2022, BCBC's responsibility is to ensure that this large brownfield site does not remain vacant and is brought forward for the right development which contributes to the economy of the Town.
- Integration – This project will ensure that the new College is accessible to all its students and community. It will make its vocational offer and training an integrated and accessible part of the Town Centre's community and service provision. The proposed development will ensure easy access to active travel and public transport is a key element of the site configuration.
- Collaboration – BCBC has collaborated extensively on the development of its new Masterplan for the Town Centre, within which this is the transformative anchor project. This opportunity is being developed collaboratively with Bridgend College and SWP.
- Involvement – A development of this nature and scale will require the ongoing involvement of the Town Centre community, both business and public to ensure its success. The College Campus will be designed with the involvement of students, staff and public to ensure it is fully integrated into the Town Centre and only enhances current Town Centre provision.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The financial implications for BCBC are in respect of supporting the first phase of this major project. This includes seeking the appropriate external funding for the proposed acquisition of freehold property, demolition of the existing building and making good and securing the site in readiness for development.

8.2 Acquisition costs are supported by a District Valuation which provided a land cost estimate report dated 22nd March 2021. The total land cost estimate for the acquisition element is £650,000 (capital). Based on previous experience we anticipate that the cost of demolition and costs associated with securing the site (revenue) will not exceed £650,000

8.3 This project is currently highlighted within BCBC's regionally endorsed pipeline projects for support from WG's Transforming Town's programme, (formally Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) programme). The Transforming Towns programme can provide grant support up to an intervention rate of 70% or eligible costs. It is on this basis that we propose to make the application.

8.4 The grant funding package being proposed to WG relating the acquisition and demolition is;

Funder	£
BCBC	£390,000
Transforming Towns	£910,000
Totals	£1,300,000

The BCBC funding is broken down as follows:

BCBC Match Funding	£	
Acquisition	£195,000	Sum is currently ring-fenced within the Regeneration SRF budget to match fund the TT programme. The SRF finance is approved within the authority's capital programme.
Demolition and associated costs	£150,000	This sum has been ring-fenced to this project within the Corporate Landlord Demolition budget for 2021
	£45,000	Sum is currently ring-fenced within the Regeneration Projects SRF budget to match fund the TT programme.
Total Match Funding	£390,000	

8.5 At present it is not envisaged that there are any further financial implications to the authority in relation to the proposed project. However, should the grant application be successful and the proposed acquisition goes ahead, the acquisition costs of the scheme will be built into the capital programme in line with financial procedure rules, at the earliest opportunity.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Note the progress that has been made in connection with the proposed acquisition of the current Bridgend Town Centre Police Station at Cheapside and the regeneration proposals to create a new Bridgend College Campus at the site.
- To authorise officers to pursue discussions with SWP on the acquisition of the current Bridgend Town Centre Police Station with WG Estate Co-location & Land Transfer Protocol
- Authorise officers to engage with WG on an application for grant funding to support the initial acquisition and future demolition of the current Police Station building,
- To receive a future report on progress of regeneration plans for the site in conjunction with Bridgend College.
- If recommended for approval to delegate the acceptance of a grant towards the proposed redevelopment of site to the Director of Communities and Section 151 Officer.

Janine Nightingale
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

Contact officer: Delyth Webb
Group Manager Strategic Regeneration

Telephone: 01656 815207

Email: delyth.webb@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 3WB

Background documents: None