

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

16 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

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 the acquisition.

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 recently completed 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 In June 2021 Cabinet approved a proposal to enable officers progress discussions with SWP on the acquisition of the current Bridgend Town Centre Police Station via WG Estate Co-location & Land Transfer Protocol.
- 3.9 Officers were also authorised to pursue and, if successful, accept grant funding from WG to support the initial acquisition and future demolition of the current Police Station building.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 In July 2021 officers were successful in securing WG grant aid to support the acquisition and future demolition of the Police Station site.
- 4.2 This followed the successful Bridgend College Strategic Outline Proposal (SOP) to Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme Investment Panel earlier this year for the project's inclusion within its current Band B programme.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 BCBC will take the lead on the first phase of works (site acquisition and demolition) with Bridgend College leading on phase 2 (site development).

- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 Officers have progressed discussions with 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. This budget was approved by Council as part of the capital programme in October.
- 4.7 Draft contracts for sale have been written and agreed by both parties and we are now in a position to exchange.
- 4.8 The contract for sale includes a leaseback agreement to SWP for 12 months. This agreement is to allow SWP sufficient time to prepare newly developed offices at their Headquarters site to accommodate the staff currently located at the central police station
- 4.9 Officers are continuing to work with SWP to help identify and progress a smaller satellite office within the Town Centre to accommodate a day to day police presence.
- 4.10 The 12 month leaseback will not adversely impact on subsequent work related to the project, which can be completed in tandem with the arrangement with Bridgend College. It is proposed that pre-demolition surveys and tenders will be undertaken prior to SWP providing vacant possession allowing the demolition works to commence immediately thereafter.

Next steps

- 4.11 Subject to Cabinet authorisation officers will finalise the legal work and complete the purchase of the site.
- 4.12 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 relating to their 21st Century Schools funding.
- 4.13 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.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

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 Town Centre the development in an investment in the transformation on the Town's economy.
- Prevention – Following SWP's vacation of their site it is , 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.

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 The following grant funding package has been secured and offer letter has been received from WG.

| 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 Demolitions Earmarked Reserve |
| | £45,000 | Sum is currently ring-fenced within the Regeneration Projects SRF budget to match fund the TT programme. |
| Total Match Funding | £390,000 | |

- 8.4 Due to the 12 month leaseback period being incorporated into the contract the demolition will not take place immediately upon purchase of the building. WG are aware and we will formally seek to ringfence this funding within the TT budget for next year, but this has not been confirmed yet. If this does not happen then further funding will be sought to progress the demolition.
- 8.5 At present it is not envisaged that there are any further financial implications to the authority in relation to the proposed project. The acquisition costs of the scheme were built into the the capital programme, approved at October Council, in line with financial procedure rules.

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.
- Authorise officers to complete the legal documentation and transaction to acquire the SWP site at Cheapside Bridgend in accordance with WG Estate Co-location & Land Transfer Protocol.

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Background documents:

Cabinet Report, 22 June 2021, Proposed Purchase of Bridgend Town Centre Police Station