

CABINET

12 JANUARY 2021

RAINHAM COMMUNITY HUB

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources

Report from/ Author: Perry Holmes, Chief Legal Officer

Summary

This report proposes further feasibility work be carried out in relation to the building of a new Rainham Community Hub at the Rainham Shopping Centre precinct.

1. Budget and policy framework
 - 1.1. The provision of Community Hubs is a matter for Cabinet.
2. Background
 - 2.1. The Council's Community Hub programme has delivered a significant range of strategic benefits across Medway, securing footfall, engagement, customer service and economic benefits. It has been a key driver in enabling Medway to buck the national trend around falling Library metrics, and has proved an outstanding success, bringing the Council closer to the communities we serve.
 - 2.2. Members and Officers have been considering the best way to follow the success of schemes in Strood, Twydall and Wigmore to benefit the residents of Rainham. The Council owns the current Rainham Library on Birling Avenue and rents the Rainham Contact Point on Station Road in Rainham. This fragmented provision is not in a central location.
 - 2.3. A more central Rainham site has been identified for the Community Hub at the Longley Road side of the Rainham Shopping Precinct on the public circulation space. Other Council owned sites have been considered and rejected including, the land behind the Cricketers pub (constrained entrance), the Station Road Car Park (not central) and other third party buildings (various reasons) near the centre of Rainham.

3. Options

- 3.1. Option 1. Cabinet could decide to leave the provision as is and take no action. This approach is not recommended by officers due to the outdated nature of the current Library, the fact that it is set away from the centre of Rainham and that the Contact Point is in a separate building on Station Street.
- 3.2. Option 2. Cabinet could decide to build a modern new Community Hub in the heart of Rainham which combines library and other community services in one place, in a way that increases footfall into the shopping precinct. This option is recommended by officers.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. Initial feasibility work to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 0 has been completed by the Council's Property and Capital Projects Team and has identified a location, outline design and indicative budget for the new Community Hub. The output of that work is contained in exempt appendix 1 to the report. Further work is needed to bring the development forward. In consultation with local Members additional features of the new Community Hub have been suggested that would be incorporated in further design work.
- 4.2. Any development in the centre of Rainham will need to be conducted sensitively to avoid undue impact on the local businesses. Discussions with local Members have highlighted how the proposal could be maximised and these need to be considered in the light of the location.
- 4.3. Given the likely scale of proposed investment, a staged approach could be taken following the RIBA 1-3 approach up to the point of having a scheme ready for submission for planning permission. Appendix 1 to the report sets out the various RIBA stages.
- 4.4. This work could be overseen by a Member led project Board, as with previous community hub projects, supported by appropriate officers.
- 4.5. **Options for completing the feasibility work**
- 4.6. The Council could commission its in-house Property and Capital Projects team to complete the Community Hub. This would play to the Capital Projects team's expertise in Community Hub developments, ensuring good involvement of Library, Customer and Transformation teams and others in the development of the new Community Hub element.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community. Using the following table this section should therefore consider any significant risks arising from your report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
There is local concern about the closure of the current library and contact point sites	Community concern	Consultation with the community to provide details of the new proposal and take comments	C3
Impact of works to local businesses in the Shopping Precinct	The works are disruptive to local businesses once started	Work with local businesses to minimise impact, enable continued trading and promote the benefits of increased footfall when complete	C3
Agreements needed for the works to proceed on the precinct	The precinct is let to a head-lessee who must consent to the works	Work with the head lessee to promote the benefits of the works including increased footfall to the Shopping Precinct	C3

6. Consultation

6.1. Any planning application would involve community consultation.

7. Climate change implications

7.1. Designing a development that is sustainable and has lower traffic movements than the current provision will contribute to the Council's carbon reduction ambitions. The contractor selected for this project would be expected to produce a sustainable development policy.

8. Financial and legal implications

8.1. RIBA stage 1-3 could be initially funded at up to £50,000 and funded from capital receipts. The initial cost estimates (net of project management fees) for the overall project were provided in December 2019 and so will need to be updated to take account of inflation.

8.2. There are not direct legal implications for this proposal.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1. The Cabinet is asked to approve option 2 as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report (developing a modern new Community Hub), and agree to progress the scheme to RIBA stage 3 (the project design work needed to submit a planning application).
- 9.2. The Cabinet is asked to agree to recommended to full Council the addition of £50,000 to the Capital Programme to progress the proposed development to RIBA stage 3.

10. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 10.1. To develop a proposal for enhancing the Rainham Shopping Centre with the addition of a central Community Hub providing Council services in the heart of Rainham.

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Appendices

Exempt Appendix 1 – initial feasibility work

Exempt Appendix 2 – initial cost estimates

Appendix 1 – [RIBA Plan of Work](#)

Background papers

None