

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Relocation of Middlesbrough Register Office

Executive Sub Committee for Property Panel

Executive Director of Commercial & Corporate Services: Tony Parkinson

30th September 2014

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is outline the proposal for the Accommodation Review relating to the Register Office and makes recommendations for the next steps.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Executive Sub Committee for Property:
 - a. Agree to the relocation of the Register Office to the Town Hall
 - b. Approve the demolition of the existing building and to establish a car park in this location, pending any future development.
 - c. That the savings are noted.

IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£150,000)
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards
Non Key

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent
Urgent report

If urgent please give full reasons

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The Council's approach under the Change Programme is to locate staff in fewer buildings. As part of this review, the potential relocation of the Register Office to the Town Hall was considered. At the time, the potential costs of this (estimated at around £630k) were prohibitive. Further review of the proposed relocation were undertaken in line with a comprehensive service review to see if operational practice could be changed in ways which would reduce the demand for space and, therefore, the costs of the relocation. This resulted in reducing costs by £259,000 to £371,000.
6. Subsequently, the relocation of the Register Office has been confirmed in the Mayor's proposals for implementation in 2014/15.

Improved Customer Service

7. There are significant, non-monetary benefits in this relocation to the Town Hall. The provision of a more attractive and larger space for weddings may deliver increased wedding income in the future. There may also be a knock-on impact in the sale of more wedding plus reception packages with the Town Hall, particularly after the Town Hall redevelopment. This would bring spaces such as the Court Room into use which would provide an extremely attractive wedding venue.
8. It should be noted that these future service developments have not been included in any increased income targets, however they could provide future benefits to the service and, more importantly, to the public.
9. The relocation of the Registration Service next to the Coroner Service, already relocated within the Town Hall, will assist with closer working relationships and the proposed joint service delivery which will provide a better service to the bereaved.
10. The Register Office will attract an additional annual footfall of at approximately 20,000 people into the Town Hall where additional Council Services could be made available to them.

Transform the Town

11. This is a key objective in the Mayor's Vision for the Town. Upon vacation of the Register Office, it is proposed that the existing building be demolished and, pending future development, be operated on a temporary basis as a premium town centre car park and an evening car park which would support the Town Hall. In the long term, the site should be considered a development site potentially linking Centre Square/Centre Square East through Corporation Road/possible Gurney Triangle development.
12. All relevant parties which currently occupy the identified space for this relocation within the Town Hall have been consulted and alternative rooms agreed.

Potential Legal and Financial Implications:

13. The financial issues are summarised in the table below:

| <u>Costs</u> | £k |
|---|------------|
| Refurbishment of Town Hall space to enable Register Office occupation | 331 |
| Design costs and fees | 39.6 |
| Demolition of Register Office | 55 |
| Instatement for car parking usage | 54 |
| Total | 479.4 |
| <u>Benefits</u> | |
| Register Office Operational Savings | 56 |
| Register Office Accommodation Savings | 33 |
| Car Park Income (up to £50k as premium business car park, lower figure used to allow for displacement) | 35 |
| Total | 124 |
| Payback | 3.86 years |

14. Other potential benefits include:
- a. removal of £211,573 capital maintenance backlog for Register Office and relevant parts of the Town Hall.
 - b. additional future income linked to improved wedding venue in the future
15. The works proposed for the Town Hall in relation to the relocation of the Register Office are being considered and aligned with the improvements proposed under the Heritage Lottery Fund bid. There are opportunities for the works proposed under both schemes to complement each other, in particular proposals to improve the entrance driveway to the Register Office, which was initially being considered as a separate piece of work for future development.
16. Subject to financial approval for the relocation to go ahead, it is estimated that the refurbishment work in the Town Hall will take up to 32 weeks to complete. Therefore, it is proposed the relocation of the Registration Service will take place around May 2015. There may be a delay in the relocation of the ceremony rooms to accommodate any wedding commitments in the existing accommodation, although all bookings will be offered the new accommodation as an alternative.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)

17. An IA is not applicable as the Registration Services will re-locate into a central accommodation provision which provides access of an equivalent level to those buildings which are being vacated. This decision would have no detrimental impact upon of any groups.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

18. The options available to the Council are:
19. **Option 1 – The Register Office to remain in its current accommodation.** This would not be accordance with the Mayor’s Budget Statement and the Mayor’s Vision for Transforming the Town. It would not support the Change Programme’s priority to locate staff in fewer buildings and there would be no savings in terms of accommodation revenue costs.
20. **Option 2 – To locate the Register Office to the Town Hall.** This would provide an improved service to the public and support the Mayor’s Budget Statement and Vision for the Town. It would also enable closer working with the Teesside Coroners Service.
21. **Risks -** There is a potential risk of increased tender costs or cost overruns as a result of unforeseen works in respect of both the demolition or refurbishment woks. However, these will be mitigated through value engineering and the use of contingencies to ensure the project falls within the cost envelope set out in para 13.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

22. **Financial –** It is proposed that the relocation will be funded from the Asset Management Building Improvement and Urgent Works Budget.
23. **Ward Implications –**None.
24. **Legal Implications –** There are no particular legal issues other than the need for the Registration Service to maintain compliance with statutory requirements, meet the General Register Office accommodation standards and the need for appropriate consents regarding demolition, change of use of site, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

25. It is recommended that the Executive Sub Committee for Property:
 - a) Agree to the relocation of the Register Office to the Town Hall
 - b) Approve the demolition of the existing building and to establish a car park in this location, pending any future development.
 - c) That the savings are noted.

REASONS

26. The relocation of the Register Office was included in the Mayor’s Budget Statement.
27. The relocation of the service and staff into an existing Council building is in line with the Change Programme to reduce the number of accommodation buildings.
28. To improve the service offered to the customers.
29. To improve the delivery of the Registration Service to the public by closer and more efficient working with the Coroner’s Service.
30. To free up a key town centre site to enable further enhancements to Centre Square.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

31. No background papers were used in preparing this report

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