

Item No. 14.	Classification: Open	Date: 16 July 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Walworth Town Hall – A Strategic Vision for the Rebuilt Town Hall .	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		East Walworth, Newington, Cathedrals and Chaucer	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

We have a clear vision to deliver a civic centre in Walworth that sets a new standard in creating a world class public place. We have developed this vision in response to community views and it is our absolute commitment to listen to everyone who wants to participate in how we take our plans forward and to involve local people and groups at every step of the way.

The near destruction of the Walworth Town Hall in the devastating fire of last March was a truly awful blow to the community that has been served by that building for generations.

What immediately became apparent in the aftermath was the overwhelming level of support and goodwill, with dozens of offers for help from local organisations, businesses and individuals. That is not because it is bricks and mortar. It is symbolic of the binding role that the town hall has played in local civic life for many years, combining the strong heritage and best traditions of our borough with local public service.

That is why I am excited to announce that it is our absolute intention to retain this Grade 2 Listed building , including reopening the Cuming Museum and providing an enhanced library, whilst ensuring it is absolutely fit for purpose to meet modern needs as we will have the very highest expectations about delivering the highest quality visitor experience.

We want a civic building that will be right at the heart of the community, an amazing public place that is open and accessible to all and loved by those who use it. We want new and better ways of interaction with the council whilst also offering local groups space and support to grow and prosper. We want to bring people together so everyone feels they have a stake in the area and a role to play in building strong communities. We want people to take pride in the town hall and continue to be proud of Walworth.

We wish to set the benchmark in creating a place that will serve local people and is rebuilt for their benefit, where barriers between the council and citizen are broken down. This will help to deliver our Fairer Future vision to help everyone to unlock their potential.

The Walworth Town Hall will play a key role in the improvements that are being delivered at the Elephant and Castle. It is a pivotal element of a new and improved offer for local residents in terms of community space and council services. Not only that, the new civic presence is a clear indication of the council's multi million pound investment in the area to support jobs and wealth creation.

I now ask cabinet to agree the recommendations laid out in this report so that we can start our community conversation with local people about the detail of how we take our collective vision forward and bring the much loved Walworth Town Hall back to its rightful place as the beating heart of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the cabinet

1. Approves the high level vision for the Walworth Town Hall as set out in paragraph 14.
2. Instructs officers to agree a consultation plan with the cabinet Member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy for a consultation process to establish whether there is support for the approved vision.
3. Instructs officers to report back by February 2014 with the results of the consultation exercise and proposals for a full project mandate for the rebuilding of the Walworth Town Hall. The report will also address potential funding streams, interim arrangements for library and museum provision, revenue/capital cost implications and explore delivery options.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The fire and action to secure the building

4. At 12.30pm on 25 March 2013 the Grade 2 Listed Walworth Town Hall suffered a major fire. The town hall comprised the Walworth one stop shop, the Cuming museum, the council chamber and offices. Initial survey assessment of damage following the 48 hour operation by the fire brigade required to extinguish the fire concluded that there had been significant structural damage to the buildings roof and to the council chamber and museum collection.
5. Whilst the fire was still being tackled on 27 March actions were being taken by the corporate facilities team to ensure the buildings safety including erecting a raking shore and scaffolding to secure the external facade. Once the emergency services returned responsibility for the building back to the council a structural engineer was appointed to undertake an inspection of the structural integrity of the building. The engineer made recommendations for minor alterations to protect the external facade and for a propping strategy to secure the internal structure. Propping works are anticipated to commence mid July and could take up to four weeks to complete.
6. Once complete the propping will enable structural debris to be safely removed from the building and a temporary roof structure to be erected. These works are currently programmed to complete in November 2013. These activities will enable a full survey of the internal and structural condition of the building to be produced. Responsibility for the building will then transfer from corporate

facilities to the regeneration team within the chief executive's department. An officer project team has already been established including representatives from chief executives and environment and leisure departments to coordinate and oversee the development of proposals for the town hall building.

7. English Heritage officers have visited the site and are fully appraised of the works that have been taken to secure the building and protect historical features to date. English Heritage has agreed to delegate responsibility for overseeing the archaeological remedial work to the council's design and conservation team. A specialist contractor is in the process of being appointed to carry out the recovery of any remaining artifacts from the museum collection and to identify any salvageable material from the listed fabric of the building. These works can only commence once the propping works and clearing of the structural debris has been completed. The consultant will be responsible for producing a base line report on the condition of the historical asset after debris has been removed. The council's design and conservation manager has advised that this exercise could take up to 3 months to complete however a realistic timetable will only be known once the consultant has carried out an initial survey of site conditions and agreed a methodology for the work.

Property strategy prior to the fire

8. In November 2010, the cabinet agreed a *Revised Office Accommodation Strategy*. This report noted that the complicated layout of Walworth Town Hall meant that it would be difficult to provide a modern, sustainable and accessible standard of accommodation and that adaptation of the building to achieve this would be an expensive option. The report further noted that re-designing the building to achieve acceptable levels of environmental performance coupled with the need to address essential works to services would require substantial retrofitting and cause business disruption including building closure.
9. The strategy concluded that the council should develop proposals for the town hall in association with the emerging plans for the regeneration of the Heygate estate with a view to maintaining public use of the building whilst exploring alternative ownership models and other uses. Subsequently a number of options have been considered but no firm recommendations as to the future use of the building prior to the fire.

Community Facilities –Heygate Outline Consent

10. The outline planning application granted consent in February 2012 includes a requirement for a minimum of 1000 sq.m and a maximum of 5000 sq.m of D1 community facilities. The consent therefore provided a potential option for the provision of public facilities at the Elephant and Castle although no decisions to pursue these have been made.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

11. The events of 25 March 2013 significantly change the context for the consideration of the future of the Town Hall and this will require a range of options to be explored so that financial and design considerations can be fully assessed . There is also a need for early engagement with the public about the future of this important local building and to consider heritage and conservation issues arising from its listed status. All these factors mean that the council must

look afresh at options for the property.

12. Conversations with the community about the future of the Walworth Town Hall and library complex have already started. The Leader, chief executive and other officers attended a public meeting hosted by the Walworth Society on the evening of Thursday 4 April 2013. This was attended by about 40 local residents as well as ward councillors and the local MP. In addition to giving their views many of those present expressed their desire to volunteer to help and opportunities will be found to respond to this support as the work progresses. The key themes raised at this meeting were:
 - The need for a longer term vision for the Walworth town Hall in addition to the short term solutions that are already in place for library, museum and one stop shop provision.
 - The aspiration to retain a strong civic presence on the Walworth Road ideally using the existing Walworth Town Hall building.
 - A multi-use civic space that could be used for meetings as well as other uses.
 - A bigger museum with more on display.
 - A better library facility.
 - Involvement of the voluntary & community sector in options for the future.
 - The need to consider the future use of the Walworth Town Hall in the wider context of the Elephant & Castle regeneration where there were plans for a civic presence on the site of the former Heygate Estate as part of the development.
 - More consultation on the future of the building.
13. To facilitate the on-going dialogue with the local community and interest groups there is a requirement to establish high level vision around which consultation can continue and initial design options can be explored.
14. Based on the feedback received from the initial public meeting and the council's own service requirements it is considered that the following key priorities for the high level vision are endorsed by the cabinet and are subject to consultation.
 - An enhanced Library space.
 - A space for the display of the Cuming collection and potentially a Southwark museum
 - A flexible space that could be used for a variety of purposes including community and civic events, exhibitions and performances
 - Facilities for marriage, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies undertaken by the Southwark registrar's service
15. The project team will develop a consultation strategy for approval by the cabinet Member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy. Officers will undertake to discuss the approach to consultation with the Walworth Society before seeking endorsement for it. Currently it is envisaged that the strategy will include a mixture of questionnaires, community conversation techniques, on line feedback channels, and meetings with interested groups such as ;
 - The Walworth Society
 - The Latin American and Bengali community
 - Wansey Street residents

- Elderly /Youth
- TRA's / Resident groups
- Existing stakeholder lists established by Lend Lease and also through the leisure centre consultation events
- Library users
- Local schools

Project Mandate

16. There are six work streams that need to be undertaken before a project mandate can be produced. These are:
 - The consultation report
 - The existing conservation management plan for the building that identifies its significant features
 - The archaeological building recording report that provides a base line report on its condition after the fire and debris clearance
 - A more informed assessment in to the council's spatial requirements for the facilities identified in the vision.
 - Full internal condition and structural survey
 - More detailed information on Lend Lease's plans for the Heygate masterplan phases one and two, which are immediately north of the site
17. It is anticipated that the outputs of these six strands will set the parameters for the outline design brief. Officers current anticipate bringing a report on a project mandate to cabinet early in 2014 for endorsement.
18. Developing plans for the site will be complex and challenging. Walworth Town Hall is a historical asset, the site is constrained by adjoining development and in addition Lend Lease are bringing forward detailed proposals for the area immediately north of it and any scheme needs to have an appropriate relationship with this development including the creation of a new public space.
19. The town hall has a very prominent location situated as it is between the Walworth Rd shopping centre and the emerging redevelopment of the Heygate Estate. So whilst there are constraints this site has huge potential to contribute towards to meeting the needs of residents, contribute to the well-being of the local economy by generating foot fall and a destination. These aspirations will be developed further in the project mandate.
20. It should be noted that the future of the existing library will not form part of the project mandate as it is considered that the future of these premises should be considered separately once the future use of the town hall has been determined.

Policy implications

21. The adopted Elephant and Castle SPD (2012) identifies a vision for the opportunity area which is for the redevelopment into an attractive central London destination with excellent shopping, leisure facilities and cultural activities. In order to achieve this vision the document identifies a series of objectives including that of the provision of 'more and improved educational, health and community facilities which meet the needs of existing and future residents' (paragraph 3.2.7). The strategic vision for the rebuilt Walworth Town Hall will support this regeneration objective through the enhancement of the library and

museum facilities.

22. The *Revised Office Accommodation Strategy* agreed by cabinet in November 2010 sets out a list of principles to guide decision making and design. These seek to ensure that investment in improving accommodation would represent best value for revenue spending and capital investment over the long term. The redevelopment of Walworth Town Hall will need to demonstrate that it supports the delivery of all of these principles and in particular achieves the following:
 - Ensure that council facilities are welcoming and usable for all residents, visitors and staff, conforming to high standards of disability access and customer service;
 - Ensure that council presence is felt in all areas of the borough and that council staff and partners are well placed to understand and engage with local people;
 - Ensure that the estate is flexible and adaptable to future needs;
 - Reduce to a minimum the total number of administrative office sites to:
 - Minimise the revenue costs of managing the residual estate;
 - Minimise the future investment costs that would otherwise be required to maintain the retained estate and comply with modern standards of accessibility and sustainability;
 - Minimise the financial, reputational and human resources risks of operating from old and un-refurbished property;
 - Maximise the opportunity for modern ways of working, including the opportunities for work across departments and with partners in ways that better meet the needs of residents
 - Maximise the council's opportunity to improve environmental sustainability;
23. The Library Service review of 2011 gave commitment to retaining all 12 of Southwark's Libraries and to continue the modernisation of the library service. Newington is the borough's fifth busiest library and serves Walworth's diverse communities. There is significant demand for study space as well as access to IT and book stock. Young people make particularly heavy use of the library.
24. The Arts Council which now has responsibility for public libraries has recently issued a report called *Envisioning the Future*. The findings of the report are based on extensive consultation and research and identify four key ingredients for the library of the future. These are:
 - Placing the library as the hub of the community
 - Making the most of digital technology and creative media
 - Ensuring that libraries are resilient and sustainable
 - Delivering the right skills for those who work in librariesThe provision of modern, improved library facilities at Walworth Road would enable the implementation of these principles, carrying on the work already in place at other libraries in the borough.
25. The Cuming Museum is a unique repository of Southwark's heritage and gives access to important artefacts and objects from around the world. A new cultural strategy for the borough is currently being prepared and the museum is a key deliverer of the proposed action plan for heritage. It has only ever been possible

to exhibit a very small percentage of the museum's collection and new provision will make possible to increase the amount of items on display and will benefit the museum's strong education programme

Community impact statement

26. One of the main objectives of any design brief for the future Walworth Town Hall will be to ensure the building is accessible to all members of the community regardless of age, disability, faith/religion, gender, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Resource implications

27. The Elephant and Castle Project Team, within the chief executive's department, are responsible for taking the rebuilding project forward and will do so through liaison with colleagues from the Corporate Strategy, Communications and Environment and Leisure. The day to day project management will therefore not incur any additional staffing costs.
28. Any costs incurred in the delivery of the consultation strategy will be contained within the available Elephant & Castle Regeneration Team budget. The strategy will consider the most appropriate methodology that will provide value for money in terms of providing residents with an appropriate opportunity to contribute to the approach moving forward.

Consultation

29. Initial consultation has taken place as set out in paragraph 12 of this report. The purpose of this report is to agree a high level vision for the rebuilt Town Hall and officers will produce a future consultation strategy to be agreed by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

30. This report asks cabinet to agree a high level vision for the future of the Town Hall. At present this does not raise any particular legal issues. As and when decisions are required to be taken on the future use of the Town Hall and the means by which those decisions will be implemented, legal advice will be sought and cabinet will be updated accordingly.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services

31. The strategic director of finance and corporate services notes the recommendations in this report for a consultation exercise and the development of proposals for a full project mandate for the rebuilding of the Walworth Town Hall. Any costs incurred in the delivery of the consultation strategy will be contained within the available Elephant & Castle Regeneration Team budget. It is further noted that a future report with proposals will address potential funding streams, interim arrangements for library and museum provision, revenue/capital cost implications and explore delivery options.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Author	Jon Abbott, Elephant and Castle Project Director	
Version	Final	
Dated	5 July 2013	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Head of Culture , Libraries, Learning and Leisure	Yes	Yes
Head of Policy and Programmes	Yes	Yes
Head of Community Engagement	Yes	Yes
Head of Communications	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	5 July 2013	