

Subject:	Accommodation Options	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Policy Overview & Scrutiny Cabinet	Date:	15 th October 2012 17 th October 2012
Report of:	Head of Finance	Portfolio Holder:	Finance & Resources
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Community Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	RECOMMENDATIONS
1.1	That subject to any further approval as required by the Constitution, Members approve the proposed course of action as noted in paragraph 5.2 and that delegated authority to proceed is given to the Head of Finance and Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources.
1.2	That following the consultation on the One Stop Shop a further report is brought back to Cabinet later in the year (November) on which a final recommendation by Cabinet is made to Full Council (December 2012).

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of the report is to give interim update on options available to the Council regarding the efficient use of its operational and surplus buildings. The current consultation regarding the One Stop Shop continues and will be the subject of a separate report in November.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **A clean and green Rossendale** – creating a better environment for all.
- **A healthy and successful Rossendale** – supporting vibrant communities and a strong economy.
- **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- Increase in empty buildings
- Legal, planning consents or heritage restrictions on the use of buildings
- Public reaction to what may be perceived as local iconic buildings
- Implications arising from the Local Government Finance Bill and the retention of local business rates as from 1st April 2013 negating the benefits of reducing business rates currently incurred by the Council.
- Council should ensure that in the disposal of any asset, deemed surplus to its requirements, that it will always have due regard of current legislation, relevant guidance and best practice.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.0 *This report has been written in the first instance for Cabinet (17th October 2012) but is an opportunity for Members of Overview & Scrutiny to consider in advance and pass comments to Cabinet.*
- 5.1 The Council has forecast in its Medium Term Financial Strategy the need to save in excess of £1m from its annual revenue cost base by 2014/15. As a result and as part of a series of measures the Council has commenced a review of its key operational and empty (or potentially surplus) buildings. A previous report was taken to Cabinet in June 2012 on this matter. As part of the previous report to Members a consultation period was approved in particular in relation to the location of the Council's One Stop Shop.
- 5.2 The June 2012 report also identified a number of surplus operational buildings which do not impact on current customer services. Officers have consulted with the portfolio for Finance & Resources and Regeneration, Tourism & Leisure on these buildings and would suggest the following course of action:

Property	Proposed Action
Ex- Town Hall, Rawtenstall	1. Retain as a development opportunity with the Council's development partner (Barnfield/Together Housing), as identified in the recent Preferred Partner procurement exercise.
Liberal Club, Rawtenstall	1. Retain as a development opportunity with the Council's development partner (Barnfield/Together Housing). 2. If 1 is deemed not to be suitable by the development partnership, seek disposal by auction.
29-45 Kay Street, Rawtenstall	1. Retain as a development opportunity with the Council's development partner (Barnfield/Together Housing). 2. If 1 not suitable by the development partnership, actively pursue rental opportunities
3, 5 & 6 Lodge Terrace, Rawtenstall (ex CPO residential property)	1. Retain as a development opportunity with the Council's development partner (Barnfield/Together Housing) as identified in the recent Preferred Partner procurement exercise. 2. If 1 not suitable seek disposal by auction
Stubbylee Hall, Bacup	1. Seek a partner or tenant and have due regard of the prevailing covenant requirements (such as an educational offer to complement tourism or other restricted use). 2. Immediate transfer of existing office based staff to the Business Centre. Grounds maintenance staff will continue to use Stubbylee Hall as a base.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 As noted above and from the previous accommodation report of June 2012, the above proposals are aimed to reduce annual revenue expenditure and to raise capital resources to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 Comments included with the report.

8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

8.1 The Human Resources implications will be understood and responded to as a consequence of the consultation.

The consultation and engagement which will be undertaken as part of the development of any proposals will support the Council's decision making process and ensure that the Council does give due regard. The Equality Act 2012 established the Public Sector Equality Duty, the duty requires the Council to give due regard to :

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The amount of regard that is 'due' (that is, the degree of attention demanded by the needs) is set out in section 49 of the Equality Act and will depend on the circumstances of the case, the greater the potential impact of a decision, the greater the regard that must be had.

9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

9.1 The initial June 2012 report asked to approve a period of consultation across a number of groups which is currently underway and consists of, inter alia:

- Staff Consultation
- Public and customer consultation
- Partners / Potential Partners
 - Green Vale Homes,
 - Lancashire County Council,
 - Citizens Advice Bureau,
 - Department of Works & Pensions,
 - Police,
 - Fire,
 - Health agencies
 - Whitworth Town Council
 - REAL / Community networks
- Heritage and Historical groups

9.2 In order to support its decision making, the Council will utilise the outcomes from the recent Citizen Panel questionnaire (carried out March – May 2012) the results of which will be

reported once the analysis has been completed.

9.3 A Community Impact Assessment has commenced and will be further developed alongside the period public of consultation, particularly in relation to the One Stop Shop.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Council is again facing a significant financial challenge over the medium term. The review and rationalisation of its operational assets will assist the Council in realising some of its financial savings target.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Various Property Working Papers	Head of Finance