

# **Proposed Decision to be made by the Portfolio Holder for Finance on or after 16 June 2017**

## **Addition to the Capital Programme for the Improvement and Extension of the car park at Eliot Park Innovation Centre, Nuneaton**

### **Recommendation:**

That the Portfolio Holder for Finance agrees to an addition to the Capital Programme of the sum of £500,000 for the extension of, and improvements to, the car park at the Eliot Park Innovation Centre, Nuneaton.

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Eliot Park Innovation Centre was opened in 2005. The objective was to provide 'easy in, easy out' managed workspace to support start-up and SME businesses develop, expand and to provide additional employment opportunities in the North of the County. The original car park provided 110 spaces plus 8 disabled bays, but in 2013 an additional 20 spaces were created by re configuring areas of the existing car park which resulted in the current 133 spaces and 5 disabled bays.
- 1.2 As at April 2017, the building is home to 36 individual companies and over 260 directly supported jobs. As the building occupancy levels have increased, so too has the demand for car parking spaces, despite encouraging car sharing, the use of public transport, cycle to work schemes etc. The situation has now reached a point whereby the constant lack of parking spaces results in many cars being double parked, with visitors and staff alike unable to exit when needed. This in turn generates difficulties when drivers are 'blocked in', which is affecting customer satisfaction levels amongst tenants. Three companies have served notice and vacated the building recently, citing constant parking issues as the primary reason for leaving.
- 1.3 The current layout has also created a number of health and safety concerns, and investment in extending and improving the car parking facilities presents an opportunity to pro-actively address these and design a more effective layout.

- 1.4 To try and mitigate the current parking situation, several units (approximately 15% - 20% of the available floor space) are now left unoccupied, resulting in a loss of revenue and employment creation opportunities. As at April 2017 some 445 square metres were vacant, resulting in a loss of rent and service charge revenue circa £72,000 pa. Additionally, the available, but currently void space would support nine businesses and around 60 additional jobs.
- 1.5 The County Council is also unable to offer its tenants the full use of the two conference rooms, as it is unable to offer on-site parking to delegates. The financial impact and loss of revenue equates to circa £20,000 pa.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding the above issues, the building and car park was constructed on an old refuse disposal site. To accommodate the ground conditions, the car park was designed to settle by some 600mm over a 9 year timescale. With the drainage inspection chambers and lighting fixtures being located on piles, the surrounding block paving has, as designed, now settled and consequently poses significant H&S risks due to the differential in levels.

## **2.0 Options & Proposal**

- 2.1 A number of options were developed via the County Council's engineering team to extend the car park across the full site, and reconfigure it in a way to maximise the number of parking spaces available and improve vehicle movements. The preferred option increases the number of car park spaces by 90 to around 220.
- 2.2 Planning permission for the new car park was considered and approved by Regulatory Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017.
- 2.3 Design Services will be managing the contract, with works being undertaken by Balfour Beatty under the tendered Highways Maintenance Contract. For smaller lower value projects such as this, this approach has proved to be competitive and offering good value for money. It also has the advantage of easy access to early contractor involvement which can be very helpful particularly with out of the ordinary scheduled projects like Eliot Park Innovation Centre Car Park. The works are scheduled with Balfour Beatty to be undertaken during the summer holiday period to help minimise disruption to tenants.
- 2.4 As part of these works, due consideration will be undertaken to integrating health and safety and equality of opportunity issues (i.e. through the provision of appropriate disabled parking spaces).

### 3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The works have been estimated to cost £398,000, however it is considered likely that these costs will increase once ground investigations have been undertaken at the start of these works. It is therefore proposed to include a significant contingency to cover this work and so a total of £500,000 is proposed to be added to the Capital Programme. Funding will be drawn down from the Business Centres Reserves Fund as required. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, the Business Centres Reserves Fund stood at £640,000.
- 3.2 As has indicated in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5 above, the current constraints on parking are leading to a loss of potential income of the order of £70,000-£90,000. Once completed therefore, we estimate that the pay-back period for the works will be c. 4-5 years.

### Background Papers

None.

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

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