

Portfolio Holder Decisions

Date: Thursday 14 December 2023

Time: 12.00 pm

Venue: Virtual

Membership

Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE

Councillor Margaret Bell

Councillor Peter Butlin

Councillor Andy Crump

Councillor Yousef Dahmash

Councillor Kam Kaur

Councillor Sue Markham

Councillor Jan Matecki

Councillor Heather Timms

Councillor Martin Watson

Items on the agenda: -

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Libraries LIF round 3 funding bid | 3 - 6 |
| 2. WFRS Training Facility - Rugby | 7 - 10 |

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

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Portfolio Holder Decision Libraries LIF round 3 funding bid

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation
Date of decision	14th December 2023
	Signed

1. Decision taken

- 1.1 The Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation approves the submission of an application by Warwickshire Libraries to the Arts Council's Libraries Improvement Fund totalling £373,000 over 3 years to support the purchase and implementation of a Sensory Mobile Library Service.

2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 The funding bid will enable the library service to extend its sensory offer, by providing a fully equipped, accessible electric vehicle with an immersive and interactive sensory room environment for children, young people (CYP) and adults, with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, dementia, and other health related conditions.
- 2.2 The vehicle will provide parents and carers of children and adults with neurodiverse issues an easier and appropriate means of accessing the library and its services, by reaching communities outside the existing library network and extending the library offer as a free, inclusive, welcoming, safe, trusted space. In addition, the mobile library will be able to travel to areas where the community does not traditionally engage with local services, be that for financial or societal reasons.
- 2.3 The vehicle will engage children and young adults with creativity and imagination and stimulate sight, hearing, touch, and smell, building confidence, social and literary skills.
- 2.4 The service will work in partnership with specialist services such as SEND and EQUIP as well as parents' groups, utilising their expertise and experience to develop the sensory service, including the layout and functions of the mobile library, specialist equipment as well as a bespoke book collection.

- 2.5 The vehicle will host an extensive library of sensory equipment to enable parents/ carers to test out sensory equipment specifically for their child on a 'try before you buy' basis. There will be a selection of specialist books, directed towards supporting parent/carers of neurodiverse children and a collection of books which will appeal to the children which can be borrowed.
- 2.6 As well as the basic experience of using the sensory equipment on the vehicle, the service will work with specialist stakeholders to develop a range of sessions which can be offered to meet the differing needs of children with neurodiverse challenges. These sessions will be built around stories and activities.
- 2.7 There is an opportunity to generate income through either hiring the vehicle at a nominal charge for fetes or letting the vehicle commercially for other activities and events.
- 2.8 If successful, the Library and Children's Service will work together to support the delivery of the programme. It is intended that the programme will be supported through volunteers. Any future maintenance cost will be supported through a reduction in the main mobile library fleet.

3. Background information

- 3.1 In April 2023, The Arts Council England (ACE) invited 'Expressions of Interest' for the third £10 million Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF). LIF welcomed applications from Library Authorities to bid for funding for innovative projects, which would extend the reach of traditional library services.
- 3.2 Warwickshire Libraries were successful in the initial submission and have consequently been invited to put in a full bid for the sensory mobile project. The conditions of the grant will expect the project to
- Invest in physical spaces, to increase libraries potential for transformation to make spaces more flexible, safer with a greater commercial potential which are more accessible and environmentally friendly.
 - Enable more community groups to use the space.
 - Increase numbers of users accessing collections and services
 - Connect libraries to communities and increase use by a greater diversity of users.
 - Support the future-proofing of modern libraries to meet evolving needs and patterns of use.
 - Improve user satisfaction and needs.
 - Improve perception of the value and role of libraries by customers, partners, and communities.
 - Increase access to library collections and community groups using library spaces.
 - Increase collaboration with a wider range of local partners.
 - Extend available hours.

- 3.3 If successful, the library service will create a steering group to deliver and oversee the project. The steering group will include specialists and senior managers from the library service, SEND and Children & Families Team, alongside Equip, SENSE and parents & carers.
- 3.4 Timescales
- July 2023 - Senior library staff attended application and guidance briefings.
 - August 2023 – Senior Library staff meet with the ACE representative to outline the project and ascertain viability.
 - January 2024 – Confirm Application to proceed (expression of interest already submitted)
 - March 2024 - Funding decisions to be shared with applicants.
- 3.5 Our plan for the project aims to:
- provide a sensory mobile library with an immersive sensory space, books & equipment for those with SEN/disabilities will travel to sites across Warwickshire, including priority places, building social & literary skills, and stimulating senses.
 - promote libraries as places for people to access those resources which are relevant to them.
 - create new and exciting opportunities for the children of Warwickshire to learn and develop their full potential.
- 3.6 The Discovery Den sensory mobile library will assist Warwickshire Library and Information Service to contribute to the Council's 'levelling up' agenda and support the Council's work with children and families across the county.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The proposal is to submit an application to ACE for up to £373,000 over a 3-year period. If granted the funding will support the purchase and implementation of the vehicle and assets required to operate the sensory mobile library. The Council will recruit a team of volunteer drivers for the vehicle and general running costs will be covered after year 3 by the planned reduction in Mobile Library Vehicles from 3 to 2. In Years 1-3 the funding from LIF will cover the costs.
- 4.2 The Council is required to provide a funding contribution of £48.5k as a condition of the grant. This funding is available from the Mobile Library Planning Gain allocation (Section 106 funding), with a contribution also coming from the National Portfolio Organisation (it is planned that the vehicle will attend NPO planned events).
- 4.3 The service will be required to keep accurate financial account of both income and expenditure and report regularly to the Art Council on the progress of the project, and processes are in place to meet this requirement.

5. Environmental implications

- 5.1 As the vehicle will be fully electric, there will be no emissions from the vehicle supporting the Council's Sustainable Futures strategy.
- 5.2 The vehicle will also have solar panels affixed to the roof of the vehicle enabling the vehicle to generate its own power whilst out on the road, thus reducing the amount of electricity required to operate the service.

Report Author	Ayub Khan Head of Libraries, Heritage & Culture and Registration
Executive Director	Rob Powell Executive Director for Resources
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Yousef Dahmash Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation

Urgent matter?	<i>No</i>
Confidential or exempt?	<i>No</i>
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	<i>No</i>

List of background papers

n/a

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Yousef Dahmash

Corporate Board

Legal – Nichola Vine, Head of Legal and Governance

Finance – Andrew Felton, Director of Finance (Deputy S151)

Equality – Delroy Madden, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team leader

Democratic Services – Helen Barnsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Councillors – Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation)

Local Member(s): n/a (county wide)

Portfolio Holder Decision WFRS Training and Response Point

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Date of decision	December 14 th 2023
Signed	

Decision taken

That the Portfolio Holder - Deputy Leader (Finance and Property) approves the movement of £1.512m capital resources from the Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS) Leamington Office Space Refurbishment Project to the WFRS Training Facility and Response Point Project to enable delivery and approves the adjustment of the total cost of each project in the capital programme accordingly.

2.0 Reasons for decision

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder - Deputy Leader (Finance and Property) has specific powers within the Constitution to make virements between schemes that have already been approved and are in the capital programme between the sums of £1m and up to £3m.
- 2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Fire and Community Safety is supportive of the recommendation to vire money between two WFRS schemes that have already been approved and are in the capital programme and has liaised with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property concerning this decision.

3.0 Background information

WFRS Training Facility and Response Point

- 3.1 The WFRS Training Facility and Response point will provide a state-of-the-art firefighting training simulator, designed to meet the training needs of WFRS now and into the future.
- 3.2 The facility can replicate a variety of fire event scenarios in a safe and controlled environment. The facility will provide the knowledge skills and understanding to enable our people to operate effectively, assertively, and safely for the benefit of our communities.
- 3.3 The breathing apparatus facility takes the form of a modular training unit known as 'Minerva'. The unit has been purchased and is currently being stored with the manufacturer. The capital budget remaining for delivery of the overall facility project is £1.5m. This will be insufficient to undertake the works required to install and make operational the Minerva, leading to the virement requested in this Report.
- 3.4 Since the commissioning of the Minerva unit, there have been problems with finalising a location for the facility. Planning consents have proved challenging and there have been consequential delays to installation. Following an unsuccessful attempt to locate the unit at Lea Marston, an alternative site has been identified on Warwickshire County Council (WCC) owned land at Paynes Lane, Rugby. Planning permission has been secured and the project is programmed to be delivered in April 2024.
- 3.5 In addition, market conditions have also changed fundamentally and inflation has led to increased costs for capital works, meaning that the overall cost of the scheme has grown.
- 3.6 Whilst awaiting provision of the Minerva facility, WFRS continues to incur revenue costs through the purchase of specialist hot fire training from a neighbouring fire service. Once the Minerva unit is operational, these costs will cease. Further, it is anticipated that the facility will also be used by external contractors which will attract revenue income to WCC.
- 3.7 To enable completion of the Minerva project, it is proposed that capital funding is re-allocated from the already approved capital programme allocation for the WFRS Leamington Office Space Refurbishment Project. The strategic objective of the capital investment for the office space was to improve the efficient and effective operation of the WFRS by ensuring the office space met the then need for staffing requirements. The overall objective in delivering the Training Facility and Response project remains the same – supporting the efficient and effective operation of the WFRS - and so it is considered that the proposed movement of capital funding will still support the overall objectives for which the original investment was made and is a more effective use of the funds given changes in ways of working.

Leamington Spa HQ Office Refurbishment.

- 3.8 A capital allocation of £2.150m was made to the WFRS Leamington site to upgrade and modernise the office space. This funding allocation was focused on the office space and was not allocated for the refurbishment of the fire station itself, which has benefited from previous investment. The WFRS Leamington office space is dated but meets the basic requirements of a workplace.
- 3.9 Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been significant change to the ways in which staff use workspaces. The Council estate is now used much differently, and colleagues work in a more fluid and agile way. Whilst the WFRS Leamington office space is still utilised regularly, seven days a week, colleagues now work from a variety of locations including Shire Hall, fire stations and from home.
- 3.10 Such changes in working patterns and locations mean that there is less pressure on the Leamington office space and therefore less of a need to invest capital to the same extent on upgrading the office space. Into the future, options could be considered on the use of this office space by WFRS and the wider WCC through an evidence-based business case.
- 3.11 The WFRS Leamington Office Space Refurbishment Project will be revised, and any refurbishment required to meet the changing staffing needs will be completed within the bounds of the remaining budget of £0.640m.

The Proposal

- 3.12 Following evaluation of tenders, a contractor has been identified to carry out the civil engineering works at Paynes Lane at a cost of £3.022m.
- 3.13 As noted above, the current remaining budget for the Minerva project is £1.5m. WFRS is seeking to meet the shortfall through a move of £1.512m from the WFRS Leamington Office Refurbishment Project to the WFRS Training Facility and Response Point.
- 3.14 It is proposed that the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property approves the transfer of the funding to enable delivery of the Paynes Lane Training and Response Point scheme.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The proposed WFRS Training Facility and Response Point at Paynes Lane is now fully costed, for delivery at £3.022m.

Paynes Lane capital budget breakdown and full project costs

Description		Cost (£)
Contractor civils fees		2,340,007
Professional Fees - Stages 3-7 (2%) Project Manager (2%)		45,867
Professional Fees - Stages 3-7 (2.2%) Clerk of Works - Building Electrical & Mechanical (2%) Construction Design & Management (0.2%)		50,453
Consultant Fees		165,000
Planning Application Fees		1,680
Building regulation fee		4,300
Surveys & Orders		140,092
Contingency (10% of Contract Sum)		274,739
Total Project Build Cost		3,022,138
Minerva - Installation & Delivery		760,000
Total Overall Project Cost		3,782,138
Approved Budget		
Minerva Purchase	770,000	
Civil Engineering	1,500,000	2,270,000
Budget Deficit		-1,512,138

- 4.2 The budget deficit of £1.512m for the successful delivery of the scheme will be funded by the virement being requested.
- 4.3 A 10% contingency (£0.275m) is built into the budget for the scheme. If any of this funding is not required it will initially be reallocated back to the WFRS Leamington Office Refurbishment Project, pending approval of the business case for the revised works.

Report Author	Dan Glorioso Area Manager - WFRS danielglorioso@warwickshire.gov.uk
Director	Ben Brook Chief Fire Officer benbrook@warwickshire.gov.uk
Executive Director	Mark Ryder Executive Director for Communities markryder@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Peter Butlin Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property peterbutlin@warwickshire.gov.uk

Urgent matter?	No
Background confidential or exempt Information	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers

Previous Cabinet and/or Council decisions relating to -

- The WFRS Training Facility and Response Project
- The Leamington Spa HQ Office Refurbishment

Members and officers consulted and informed

Cllr Andy Crump; Portfolio Holder for Fire and Rescue and Community Safety
 WCC Corporate Board
 Chief Fire Officer - Ben Brook
 WFRS - Fire Leadership Team
 WCC - Lead Commissioner Development & Assets
 WCC - Delivery Lead Soft Facilities Management
 WCC - Finance
 WFRS - Commercial Training
 WFRS - Training & Development
 John Hopper - Procurement
 Nichola Vine - Legal
 Nicole Conway - Democratic Services
 Andrew Felton - Finance

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