

## **BSR-additional information required by the Liberal Democrat Group**

### **S4798/RI4797 - Selective Landlord Licensing**

*Cost of the external consultancy study and extent to which it revealed anything that was not apparent in scrutiny of this item one year ago.*

**Cost of the external consultancy study** £11,604 (March – September 2020)

**Extent to which it revealed anything that was not apparent in scrutiny of this item one year ago** The feasibility study and report produced by external consultant Ravi Phull has enabled an independent conclusion to be reached in relation to the need for selective licensing of private rented properties within the City. The study involved detailed analysis of candidate Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) geographical areas within the City in relation to each of the six criteria for selective licensing, a more detailed analysis than that done at ward level, the six criteria being:

- Low housing demand
- A significant and persistent problem with anti-social behaviour
- Poor property conditions
- High levels of migration
- High levels of deprivation
- High levels of crime

This analysis was particularly valuable in relation to the three of the criteria of anti-social behaviour, poor property conditions and high levels of crime for which there was some query regarding them potentially being applicable.

This detailed analysis led to the reliable conclusion that selective licensing is not an appropriate tool for the Council at the present time.

The study and report reinforced necessary targeted enforcement and identified areas of the City for action. This will be included within the Environmental Health Operational Plan 2021/22 and will support the Council's objective of securing further improvements to the quality of the private rented sector within the City.

The study and report has also reinforced other relevant observations in relation to Airbnb's and the fact that selective licensing is not an appropriate nor applicable tool to address issues in relation to this short-term accommodation within the City, (Committee Report Appendix A, pages 42-44).

## **II4754 - New Business Opportunities on Parks and Open Spaces**

*What is the range of possible new activities and which open spaces are under consideration for them? Which are the relevant council policies in mind with which the new activities might align - given the extra income proposed, is that the main driver? Is this item totally contingent on CAP 4741 or is some of it freestanding?*

The budget item is intended to call for and seek creative and enterprising ideas to help deliver a vision for better parks and green spaces across the city.

The initiative is intended to improve facilities across parks and green spaces in Cambridge, whilst generating essential income that will help to ensure they thrive and are well managed for future generations.

Some of Cambridge's parks, such as Jesus Green and Lammas Land, are extremely popular leisure destinations and already have brilliant facilities for visitors, but many, while offering beautiful surroundings and quality play equipment, are lacking in other amenities.

The council intends to invite creative, civic-minded entrepreneurs and businesses to share their ideas and explore potential options that will enhance visitor's enjoyment of parks and green spaces while preserving what makes them so special. A range of ideas will be considered including everything from catering, health and well-being and leisure activities to one-off events and seasonal hospitality.

We have a real opportunity to make the most of our many beautiful parks and green spaces; and using these valuable assets in a creative and sensitive way to improve our parks and green spaces and associated public services/ facility offer, whilst securing external investment and generating additional income and helping local businesses to develop and thrive. Any initiative that adds social and economic benefit, whilst delivering a better service for Cambridge's parks and green spaces, will be considered. A robust and transparent assessment process will be developed for proposals to be considered against.

This item relates to CAP4741, in that we will seek new or improved uses from public toilets identified as surplus to requirements.

**B4788 - Communication work on changes to council service delivery and priorities**

*This proposal is not sufficiently clear and needs a fuller definition.*

This proposal is intended to provide resources for the Council to engage with residents, business, staff and other stakeholders on the potential transformation of the way the council works, the relationship between the council and local communities, and potential implications for service delivery. The precise details of the engagement process have not been worked up yet – the budget proposal will allow the council to bring in expertise to help advise on that and deliver a more in-depth engagement approach. This is linked to the transformation programme – and in particular the co-operative council workstream - as described on pages 52-53 of the BSR. In part, this replaces the allocation of funding for community engagement that had been made in last year's BSR but which was surrendered in July 2020 as part of the emergency budgetary changes, when coronavirus / lockdown made it apparent that it would not be possible to carry out that planned engagement during 2020/21.

## **CAP4706 - Corn Exchange**

*The full business case for this project in line with the council's requirement prior to inclusion in the capital programme. Information required if not in the business case: the proportion of the spend that is dedicated to carbon efficiency and a quantification of its impact on the carbon footprint of the building; extent of impact of the total project on future income; whether other long term options for the location of a city auditorium were considered before developing this proposal.*

### **1. Context**

There is a capital bid proposal for this work in the BSR - CAP4806 Cambridge Corn Exchange – Infrastructure improvements and upgrades, with £1,000,000 scheduled to be spent in 21/22.

A draft business case for this project was prepared in October 2020.

### **2. Background**

i) The business case was prepared when the venue outlook for 20/21 was uncertain, both in respect of a) when it might reopen, and b) the prospect of receiving Government funding support.

ii) The Corn Exchange is an important part of the cultural infrastructure of the city and a major contributor to the evening economy. Service delivery is now cost neutral, following restructuring of the operation as a result of the transfer from Cambridge Live.

iii) The 2020 energy certificate highlights the adverse performance of the venue, scoring the least energy efficient grade available, and given the Council's commitment to addressing climate change, there is a need - and in the current enforced closure position, an opportunity - to act

iv) The mechanical plant has been assessed by the Council's contractor, TSG, and is deemed to be in very poor condition due to age and lack of planned preventative maintenance. Operational functionality and reliability are now significant risks.

v) A modern system for more flexible, responsive and effective management, including adjustable settings, smart controls for temperatures, air flow and water usage will not only reduce consumption of electricity, gas and water, but also improve the comfort and suitability of the venue of the audience and performers.

### **3. Current position**

i) There is now more clarity about financial position as much of the economic impact of 20/21 has been addressed through the following funding avenues: the Government Job Retention Scheme (furlough), the Government Income

Compensation Scheme, and the Culture Recovery Fund (estimated figures: £326,994 Job Retention Scheme; £564,886 Income Compensation Scheme; and £501,070 Culture Recovery Fund).

ii) A second-round bid to the CRF is being prepared to cover the period April-June 2021. The eligibility criteria state that the bid must be prepared on the basis that the business is viable and if feasible, the venue could be open for business. Therefore, any planned works should not compromise business activity from 1.4.2021.

iii) The highest priority improvements are as follows:

- Replacement of the boilers
- Replacement plant room controls
- Replacement of the ventilation system
- Replacement & relocation of the heating pumps
- Plumbing and pipework overhaul
- Installation of a pressurisation unit

iv) These works offer the biggest gain to the Council in terms of improving energy efficiency, reducing utility consumption and reducing the carbon footprint of the building.

v) The work can be procured through existing framework contracts (TSG and Refit) and commissioned to be completed before the end of March 2021. The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £250,000 and the total energy saving will be quantified as part of the procurement process.

vi) A recent survey has identified the need for extensive roof repairs. A building inspection report was produced in 2014 by Mouchel, this was then reviewed in 2017. This review stated a vast majority of roof elements were in a 'fair' or 'poor' status of condition, with recommended replacement, in some areas due to health and safety aspects. Some works were completed in 2017/18 but many are still outstanding. A further review will be required to reassess and create a priority list of key elements and time scales desired. The works may require exposure of the plant room, and an extended period of closure and so it is proposed not to proceed in this first phase.

vii) The following internal improvement works will be carried out in other down time:

- Seating replacement
- Toilet refurbishment
- Decoration

These costs are not included in the current capital bid and so additional funding will be required from internal or external sources.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- i) Procure plant works as set out in 3 iii), and proceed with the work to be completed by the end of March 2021
- ii) Identify a period when roof works can be carried out at minimum disruption to the business and programme. Reserve committed funds as required.
- iii) Identify further funding streams to progress internal improvements at a time which causes minimum disruption as above.

## **URP4739 - Review and consideration of possible alternative delivery models for the Arts Distribution Service**

*This proposal is not sufficiently clear and needs better definition. Why is the issue not a temporary one, requiring a short-term tiding over of the service during the pandemic, as is proposed in other services where there is a covid-related reduction in income?*

### **Background**

The council setup the Arts Distribution service more than 20 years ago, with the key objective to support the local Arts community and to offer promoters an affordable alternative to illegal flyposting.

The service has proved to be very popular and very successful in discouraging flyposting and is well valued by all of its users and is seen as invaluable by many and consistently creates a small financial surplus after costs on an annual basis.

Following a review of the service in 2013 its operation outside the city boundary was disbanded. Since then the service successfully continues to operate within the city boundaries and is very much focused on Art activity within the Cambridge City.

The service provides two core sales areas; there are 80 outdoor poster boards, at 46 different sites, in and around the city and 8 different leaflet rounds distributing into key Arts and university based venues in the city.

### **Current service position**

The service has been through several corporate restructures in recent years and as a result of the most recent in 2015 (which followed on from the 2013 review specific to the service) now sits within the Environmental Services, Streets & Open Spaces Team.

By virtue of the number of moves the service has made and with awareness of several legacies attached, the new team commissioned an independent review of the service. This was undertaken by APSE solutions (Association for Public Service Excellence). The APSE reports drew many conclusions and recommended many actions based on the detailed assessment of the current service provision and how it is promoted, delivered, and managed. APSE report key findings as follows:

- The APSE report surveyed a cross section of the current client base and found that the local Arts community rely heavily on the service and value it highly, to promote their shows, events and exhibitions.
- The first part of the report and its associated research found that the leaflet service is currently not financially viable and that prices could not be raised enough to make it viable in the current market. This was studied in greater detail the second report and formed its own recommendations.
- The second report concluded that the leaflet part of the business should be phased out the leaflet rounds, whilst introducing more business orientated poster boards to replace and potentially increase income.

- Overall the services market position could allow increases to its current pricing structure.
- Electronic poster boards although desirable to introduce are expensive and the service currently does not have the financial investment to introduce these in the early years of the action plan. It is acknowledged however that the service will need to respond to market demands and that, in the long-term, digital marketing would update the service and potentially increase both the customer base, and with it, the income potential. There are many companies that would come in and install electronic poster boards and this should be a future aspiration.

### **Current financial position**

Traditionally underpinned by the core objective of preventing indiscriminate fly posting, prices for the service have always been kept down, to make sure that we offer an affordable service. The service still responds well even with electronic based alternatives in the market place and the yearly price increases have not seen any discouragement of its use by a well-established client base.

In 2019/2020 the service generated around £70,000.00, with running cost of around £90,000, leaving an operating loss of £20,000.

As part of the APSE review all regional local authorities as well as some national cities were approached to see if any had a service like Cambridge, to see how these services function in comparison and benchmark our prices to check our market position. It became clear through this work that the Distribution Service is quite unique, probably as a highly cultural based university city, with its museums, Colleges and societies, requiring advertisement of their events and activities.

COVID has had an impact in 2020/21 on the financial performance of the Service, however the Service in has proven to be invaluable in getting across corporate COVID messaging and also when cultural activities have been muted as being deliverable or permitted, the poster boards are a first port of call for those wishing to promote new activities.

Based on the above, service managers are recommending a review of the service in 2021/22. Part of the review will consider the composition and make-up of the service, including revisiting its primary purpose and future need in an increasingly digitally based marketing world.



## **CAP4741/S4743 - Investment programme for public toilet re-purposed property assets/ Public Toilet Review and policy implementation**

*To explain how the assumption has been arrived at that the city has surplus public toilets; what the revenue savings consist of and how arrived at; examples of existing facilities to be considered as redundant; what is meant by 'alternative facilities'; illustrations of locations and types of alternative uses. Explanation of absence of business case in compliance with council capital processes prior to approval for inclusion in the capital plan.*

### **To explain how the assumption has been arrived at that the city has surplus public toilets**

In 2012, an independent report was commissioned to look at public conveniences in Cambridge, which included a condition assessment; cost v usage rates and alternative facility proximity analysis; and explored options available to the Council. This report, together with subsequent officer bench marking, has reviewed provision at other authorities (accounting for population) and Cambridge has been found to provide more facilities than many other comparator authorities.

### **What the revenue savings consist of and how arrived at**

Revenue savings are predominantly realised via removal of daily cleaning of facilities, maintenance upkeep (this cost is both internal and external) and cessation of associated utility costs for each building

### **Examples of existing facilities to be considered as redundant**

- Park Street – owing to impending redevelopment
- Arbury Court – owing to low user numbers and proximity of alternatives
- Barnwell Road – owing to low user numbers and proximity of alternatives
- Chesterton Recreation Ground – owing to low user number and very poor condition
- Kings Hedges Recreation Ground – currently summer opening only with on site alternative available

### **What is meant by 'alternative facilities'; illustrations of locations and types of alternative uses**

Park Street:

Alternative facilities - two facilities within close proximity at Quayside and Jesus Green or if going towards city centre nearest is Lion Yard.

Alternative use – None – to be demolished as part of car park redevelopment.

Arbury Court:

Alternative facilities - two facilities within close proximity at 171 Arbury Road (housing offices) and Arbury Community Centre (TBC), Meadows Centre provides full public access also.

Alternative use – possible satellite welfare space for CCC or re-purpose for community use.

Barnwell Road:

Alternative facilities - one of the most expensive cost per head facilities in city, numbers have significantly declined since the local McDonalds was built with many viewing this as a more suitable alternative

Alternative use – possible use by Bowls Club or wider community facility.

Chesterton Recreation Ground:

Alternative facilities - owing to low user number and very poor condition Whilst no immediate facility is available the current maintenance burden is significant and work required equally so. Currently viability within new pavilion still being explored.

Alternative use – not yet defined – remedial repairs and decommissioning might not be financially viable

Kings Hedges Recreation Ground:

Alternative facilities - Open April to September this facility has a viable alternative alongside – Kings Hedges learner pool, which facilities can be made available for use.

Alternative use – with Jedburgh Court complex so could be repurposed as commercial let – small business office space.

**Explanation of absence of business case in compliance with council capital processes prior to approval for inclusion in the capital plan.**

Business case submitted October, 2020 – separate copy attached. It should be noted that Cherry Hinton Recreation Ground facility, first recommended to be closed, is now remaining open; and Silver Street, whilst closed for the foreseeable future (owing to social distancing not being achievable) is subject to redevelopment and therefore, viewed as closed temporarily.

### **CAP4787 Market Square Project**

*Accepting that the proposed project stage is necessary to clinch actual funding opportunities, what level of 'sanity check' for obtaining funding has already been carried out? What opportunities exist on an illustrative basis and have comparable schemes succeeded in attracting such funding elsewhere? Is the scheme likely to include any income generative element?*

Part of the current RIBA Stage 2 (Concept Design) consultant's brief is to undertake an outline investment appraisal to determine the associated capital and revenue investment need; and how and from where this funding would be met. We have yet to receive this information in full but have so far been advised that:

"It is felt this scheme will deliver strong Social Value Uplift, Land-Value Uplift and economic opportunities, with an expected preferential benefit cost ratio. This makes it a strong candidate for Grant Funding based on Green Book Assessment criteria <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-green-book-and-accompanying-guidance-and-documents> and capital funding should be sought through regional and national funding schemes (yet to be identified). More work would need to be undertaken to assess the scheme in line with the Green Book Five Case model to make a funding application. The "Five Case Model" is the best practice standard recommended by HM Treasury for use in central Government by Departments and other Government bodies and by all those with responsibility for deciding how public money should best be spent."

To support city centre/ 'high street' recovery post COVID, we expect the Government to continue to make capital grant funding available for projects which achieve this, including via Future High Streets Fund and Growth Fund (the latter administered by the Combined Authority). We believe the Market Square project would fit the Fund criteria, given its economic development focus; but we need to get the project to an 'oven ready' position (ie. secure Planning approval for detailed design) to be able to take advantage of such opportunities. A recent million+ pound Growth Fund bid for the project was turned down by the Combined Authority, on the basis that the project was not sufficiently 'oven ready'.

In addition to Government funding, we will also be researching and pursuing funding opportunities from private foundations, philanthropic benefactors, the Heritage Lottery Fund and exploring the feasibility of crowd-funding and other innovative ways of raising funds.

Our consultants have been asked to provide relevant examples where successful funding applications have been made for similar projects they have worked on.

### **Is the scheme likely to include any income generative element?**

Yes, the scheme will enable the Council to secure additional income from maximising use of the available space provided (around the market during the day and in place of the market at night) for licensed commercial events and activities, such as films shows, theatre, concerts, night market; and restaurant/ bar outside tables/ chairs.

**S4808/S4807 - Stop Financing Capital expenditure from revenue resources/  
Cease contributions to the vehicle repairs & renewal reserve**

*What proportion of the delivered capital programme has been funded from revenue over the past 10 years? An explanation of how funding of the capital programme is expected to work in practice following these proposals. How will available funding be established ahead of determining projects to be implemented? What type of capital receipts can the council expect over time? Given that most operational capital projects and their repair and renewal are not income generative, how will borrowing to fund them be paid off in future? What future relief is there from ever greater debt servicing costs out of the revenue budget?*

1. *What proportion of the delivered capital programme has been funded from revenue over the past 10 years?*

The following table has been compiled from the council's statement of accounts.

Year	GF capital expenditure (£000)	Financed from revenue and reserves (£000)	% financed from revenue and reserves	Financed through MRP/VRP (£000)	% financed from MRP/VRP
2019/20	19,914	2,243	11.3%	9,758	49.0%
2018/19	61,003	5,868	9.6%	455	0.7%
2017/18	29,051	5,868	20.2%	294	1.0%
2016/17	18,971	2,331	12.3%	0	0.0%
2015/16	25,821	9,598	37.2%	0	0.0%
2014/15	6,027	2,449	40.6%	0	0.0%
2013/14	8,361	2,569	30.7%	0	0.0%
2012/13	7,112	2,688	37.8%	0	0.0%
2011/12	6,940	3,268	47.1%	0	0.0%
2010/11	4,869	1,997	41.0%	0	0.0%

2. *An explanation of how funding of the capital programme is expected to work in practice following these proposals.*

**Budget setting**

An annual budget of generally available capital spending will be determined based on affordability. This will be made up of capital receipts and borrowing. It will be reviewed and agreed in the MTFS, prior to capital expenditure proposals coming forward during the budget setting process. Proposals will be prioritised within this spending envelope. Proposals may come forward with alternative funding identified, e.g. S106 contributions, that could be approved over and above the level of the general funding available.

## Financing

At each year end, capital expenditure is financed by matching actual funding against the expenditure. At that point, actual capital receipts will be used, with the remainder of the expenditure being left unfinanced. The unfinanced portion gives rise to a borrowing need, known as the capital financing requirement or CFR.

Whilst this unfinanced portion can be considered to be 'funded from internal or external borrowing', the council's need to borrow is managed through its treasury management function, which considers all the cash balances of the council together and borrows based on the overall need for liquidity (availability of cash to make payments as they become due).

The unfinanced capital expenditure is financed over the life of the underlying assets through the charging of minimum revenue provision (MRP) each year. This, together with interest on external debt, makes up the revenue cost of this funding strategy.

*3. How will available funding be established ahead of determining projects to be implemented?*

Available funding will be determined through the MTFS process, based on the latest forecasts of capital receipts, interest rates and affordability.

*4. What type of capital receipts can the council expect over time?*

The council will receive capital receipts from commercial property, administrative buildings and from Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) developments.

*5. Given that most operational capital projects and their repair and renewal are not income generative, how will borrowing to fund them be paid off in future?*

The process of charging MRP ensures that revenue funding equal to amounts borrowed to finance assets is put aside. The management of debt, investment and cash balances is undertaken in accordance with the treasury management strategy.

*6. What future relief is there from ever greater debt servicing costs out of the revenue budget?*

The revenue cost of the capital programme will be managed through the MTFS and budget setting processes as it has been previously when capital was funded directly from revenue. The following options are available to manage these costs:

- Generate additional capital receipts
- Identify alternative funding sources, such as grants, contributions, sponsorship etc
- Repay or refinance existing debt, where feasible
- Reduce the levels of capital expenditure
- Identify additional revenue income or cost reductions

**BSR item S4682 - Closure of Housing Cashiers**

*How many clients were regularly using the cashier service immediately prior to its closure because of the pandemic in March 2020? Has input been sought from them about this proposal? Can we have a description of the alternative means being used by these clients during the temporary closure? Please also supply the analysis behind the statement that this measure has no impact on poverty rating.*

We have analysed data on use of the Arbury Road cash office in October 2019 and looked at how those customers made payments in October 2020. We've chosen October as our starting point so that we can compare the same month in each year to make sure the analysis isn't affected by seasonal fluctuations.

In October 2019 283 customers made a payment through the Arbury Road office. 83% of these paid by cash and 17% by cheque.

In October 2020, 246 of those customers made a payment, using the following methods:

- 40% paid online
- 32% paid by payment card (e.g. PayPoint or post office)
- 7% paid by direct debit
- 4% paid via Universal Credit
- 3% paid by bank transfer

The remaining 14% (34 customers) paid by cheque or via an assisted cash payment at Mandela House.

At Mandela House, in customer services, we reviewed our data over summer of 2020 and identified regular visitors to the cash office at Mandela House. We then contacted those customers where we had contact details and talked to them about different options available to them, encouraging wherever possible direct debit as our preferred option. As the reception and cash office at Mandela House has been closed for some months now, we are now in business as usual, maintaining support for those customers who need assistance from an Advisor to make a payment including (as shown by the data above) some former customers at the Arbury Road cash office.

Housing officers have likewise been providing a range of support to tenants during the lockdown period including proactive contact with customers through the Assistance Housing Officers and the Universal Credit Support officer to identify tenants who may be struggling to make a payment and offer support. This support could include taking payments, support signing up for other payment routes, flexible payment plans, help with budgeting. I have provided the full list of support offered at the end of this email.

The project team are also working with the council's tenant and leaseholder representatives to inform the development of the final service model and ensure this reflects the wider views of council tenants.

We have not seen any spike in arrears following the closure of the cash office and as a result we have not assessed the closure as having a negative impact on poverty at this stage.

- **Income analytics** – This is a separate module linked to the orchard system that enables texts and emails to be sent directly to tenants with a variety of different messages on them. One of the messages contains a link and information about how to access the portal and make payments or check their balance. Others offer help and assistance if they are struggling financially and would like someone to speak with.
- **UC support officer**  
The UC support office proactively contacts tenants at the point they move to UC. The UC officer offers guidance and advice to avoid the tenant accruing arrears, and will help with any issues they may have, (for example a joint tenancy where only one person is in occupation and UC would only pay 50% of the housing costs – tenant can be assisted to make sure they get 100% of the housing costs paid). They will also help to set up payment plans, help with budgeting, identify other benefits they may be entitled to, help them with signing up for the reduced water tariffs, etc.
- **Financial inclusion officers**  
Financial inclusion officers support tenants with complex financial situations via referrals from the team or by keeping in touch with clients they work regularly with, they will advocate for them, help with budgeting, apply for benefits, check they are getting the correct benefits and payments, issue food and fuel vouchers, and offer advice and guidance on other matters such as downsizing.
- **Assistance Housing Officers**  
AHO's know who in their patch could be struggling to make payments and they make proactive contacts to take payments, make arrangements. Etc. The team also keep track of which tenants might be affected by the bedroom tax and will make DHP applications on their behalf when needed and will also carry out the following:
- **Welfare checks**  
Prior to lockdown Housing officers, AHO's would be making visits to tenants in their patches, dropping cards, making extra efforts to make welfare checks
- **Flexible payment arrangements**  
As a result of the Pandemic and many tenants being affected by furlough or reduced income, City Homes have been adopting flexible payment arrangements where tenants pay reduced amounts for a period of time, for example if a tenant is receiving 80% of their salary and arrangement might be made for them to pay 80% of their rent for a period of time

- **LIFT**

City Homes are also in the process of implementing the LIFT dashboard – (Low Income Family Tracker). This is a much more targeted reporting tool providing insights from ward level down to individual level which alerts us to vulnerable tenants, or tenants who are not receiving all the benefits they are entitled to, and are struggling financially, so that we can target the correct support for them.