

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**FINANCE and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**01 March 2006**

**Joint Report of the Central Services Director and Customer Services Manager**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 CAPITAL PLAN FAST TRACK EVALUATIONS – CENTRAL AND EXECUTIVE SERVICES**

**Summary**

**A “fast track” Capital Plan evaluation for the redesign of receptions at Tonbridge Castle and Gibson Building, Kings Hill is submitted to Members for approval in accordance with the agreed review procedure.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 At the meeting of the Finance and Property Board on 4 January 2006 a number of capital schemes were recommended for “fast tracking” and Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2006 recommended a corporate Capital Plan provision to cover the implementation of the schemes. It is hoped that this approach will be approved by Council on 20 February 2006 when considering the overall budget.

1.1.2 Further Member support for expeditious progress on these matters was provided at the Customer Contact Advisory Board on 26 January 2006 when the approach of establishing an integrated Customer Services Team was endorsed as was the need to bring forward and implement without delay proposals for redesign of these two reception areas.

**1.2 Redevelopment of Receptions at Kings Hill and Tonbridge Castle**

1.2.1 This report brings forward the scheme for proposed modifications to the layouts of the receptions and cash office at Kings Hill and Tonbridge and the Tourist Information facility at Tonbridge Castle to better meet the needs of the new proposed integrated team to deliver face-to-face customer services. The evaluation also takes on board the proposals to close the Council’s cash offices at both sites in the summer of 2006 and offer the alternative provision of cash kiosks for payment facilities.

**1.3 Appointment of Architect/Design Team**

1.3.1 As the proposed redesign at Tonbridge Castle centres mainly around areas of the building most recently redesigned by Fry Drew Knight Creamer (FDKC) they have

been approached to utilise their knowledge of the building to further redesign the area to the latest requirements.

- 1.3.2 FDKC have also proved very effective on numerous projects for Leisure Services including works to receptions at the Angel and Larkfield Leisure Centres so it appeared logical to involve them in the redesign of the Gibson Building Main Reception.
- 1.3.3 FDKC can offer a full service from feasibility to tender documentation and contract administration using Structural Engineers and Quantity Surveyors well known to them. Their fee offer is generally in line with those quoted on previous commissions and it was considered highly unlikely that a different procurement process would lead to material savings.
- 1.3.4 On the above basis FDKC have already commenced feasibility studies and have presented their initial sketches to an officer working group in anticipation that they will be instructed to complete the full commission if their feasibility ideas are accepted. These initial sketches and provisional costings formed the basis of the costings presented to Members at the January meeting of the Board.

#### **1.4 Reception and Tourist Information Centre at Tonbridge Castle**

- 1.4.1 The initial feasibility study presented by FDKC attempted to address our aim of fully integrating arrangements for all face to face service contacts with the public at Tonbridge Castle incorporating space vacated by the proposed closure of the cash office later this year and providing secure accommodation for the replacement cash kiosk.
- 1.4.2 Discussions around the utilisation of the existing layout quickly identified the restrictions of the current space available that may prevent the aim of full integration. It was agreed that FDKC be asked to widen the scope of their brief to include possible utilisation of back office space. These plans with full costings of both potential schemes will be available for the meeting.

#### **1.5 Main Reception, Gibson Building**

- 1.5.1 FDKC have been asked to develop their initial feasibility plans to take on board the closure of the cash office, provision of secure cash kiosk and, in addition, consider the repositioning of the main entrance doors to create a more balanced layout to compliment the team of face-to-face customer services staff proposed.
- 1.5.2 Again, FDKC are developing their plans to accommodate these further works and detailed proposals and costings will be available at the meeting.
- 1.5.3 Evaluation templates setting out the detail of the proposed reception schemes at Tonbridge Castle and Gibson Building, Kings Hill will be sent to Members before the meeting.

## **1.6 Legal Implications**

1.6.1 Nil

## **1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.7.1 The costs of the proposals have been incorporated in the Capital Plan. A judgement about the relative value for money of the schemes will be required when their details become available.

## **1.8 Risk Assessment**

1.8.1 The Council's aspirations in relation to its customer contacts risk being compromised if the proposed reception area improvements are not progressed.

## **1.9 Recommendations**

1.9.1 It is RECOMMENDED that

- (i) action taken in consultation with the Chief Executive to appoint Fry Drew Knight Creamer as Architects for the feasibility study be approved;
- (ii) if the scheme proceeds they be instructed to complete the full commission;
- (iii) schemes for the redevelopment of the receptions at Tonbridge Castle and Gibson Building, Kings Hill be approved from the options to be distributed for inclusion in List A of the Capital Plan and progressed for implementation early in 2006/07.

The Central Services Director and Customer Services Manager confirm that the proposals contained in the recommendations, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: John DeKnop

Nil

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