



CABINET 1 AUGUST 2001

**LOCAL INFORMATION OFFICE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING
AT STANNINGTON CAR PARK, ASHLEY ROAD/SPENCER
ROAD, NEW MILTON**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. A comprehensive review of the services provided by Local Information Offices identified an action plan to provide a high quality information service. This action plan seeks to increase the scope for joined-up working with partners and for technology innovation to support the service. For some time, both the District and Town Councils have been seeking a suitable site for local information offices in New Milton. The District Council, New Milton Town Council (NMTC) and the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) all have office accommodation in New Milton that is unsuitable for long term occupation.
- 1.2. At the meetings of 6 and 20 December 2000 Advisory Cabinet and Policy and Resources Committee respectively resolved to support proposals for the construction of a local information office (457 sq. m.) together with 12 "affordable" flats (7no. 1 bed, 5no. 2 bed) at Stannington Car Park, authorising the Director of Environment Services to dispose of the land for such purposes, subject to the granting of planning permission.
- 1.3. This proposal involves the construction of a new 3 storey building on land owned by the District Council. It includes a "one stop shop" for the District Council, NMTC, the CAB and other service providers at ground floor level, together with flats provided by Swaythling Housing Society on the first and second floors.
- 1.4. New Milton is an area with a high need for affordable housing. The proposal would help meet those local housing needs.
- 1.5. In designing the scheme it was planned that the office partners, Swaythling and the Housing Corporation will fund the building's construction and fitting out. Members should note that currently the District Council funds 90% of the running costs of the CAB. The report to the earlier meeting noted the need to consider further the capital and revenue implications of the proposal.
- 1.6. The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress that has been made since the previous report and to determine how to progress the project.

2. PROGRESS

- 2.1. Since the December meeting discussions have continued with the Housing Corporation and the main partners.
- 2.2. Following representations from New Milton Town Council and the local community the proposed building has been redesigned. At its meeting of 14 February 2001 Planning Development Control Committee resolved to grant planning permission for the development subject to a planning agreement limiting occupation of the offices to governmental and related organisations and the flats to use as affordable housing.
- 2.3. This revised proposal has been costed. Overall scheme costs are estimated to be in the region of £1.4m (subject to tenders).
- 2.4. The Housing Corporation has agreed, in principle, to inject capital funding into the project. Details have yet to be confirmed, though this grant funding is likely to be in the region of £350,000. Discussions are continuing with the Housing Corporation and it is hoped a conclusion can be reached on the level of grant contribution in the near future.
- 2.5. Discussions are underway with other potential funding providers, including Hampshire County Council and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. At this stage it is not certain whether any additional funding will be available.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE ACTION

- 3.1. The level of funding that is likely to be made available by the Housing Corporation is less than the original bid. As any funding gap will need to be filled by scheme partners it is desirable to reappraise the proposal to ensure that it represents good value for money. Members may then be made fully aware of the schemes financial implications.
- 3.2. The reappraisal should take the form of an options appraisal that includes an assessment of the most favourable way of funding the scheme together with an appraisal of alternative methods of delivering the planned services by utilising any suitable existing property in New Milton, and of providing affordable housing.

4. EMPLOYEE SIDE COMMENTS

- 4.1 The Employee Side are pleased that some progress is being made with the provision of the new facility.
- 4.2 This would provide a better working environment for the employees than are presently enjoyed. The issue of lone-working at this location has been a major concern, which it is hoped will be addressed as

soon as possible – and anyway prior to the new information office being built.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is not considered that the current proposal has any overriding adverse environmental implications. Planning Development Control Committee have resolved to grant planning permission for the proposal. An assessment would need to be carried out of the implications of any alternative method of providing the facilities.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A new facility at Stannington would increase footfall and improve natural surveillance of the car park. An assessment would need to be carried out of the implications of any alternative method of providing the facilities.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The District Council has been searching for suitable office accommodation in New Milton for a considerable length of time. The CAB and NMTC are also in need of new office accommodation, and there is a significant need for affordable housing in New Milton. The current proposal would help to meet these needs and objectives.
- 7.2 It is, however, essential that any proposal to improve local service delivery and to provide additional affordable housing represents good value for money. It is, therefore, desirable to carry out a further appraisal of the scheme and of alternative methods of meeting the needs and objectives prior to determining a way forward.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

Members ask officers to urgently examine the options available to provide the proposed office accommodation and affordable housing and to report their findings back to Members at the earliest opportunity.

Further Information

Housing Issues

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Background Papers:

None

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