

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 20 June 2013**

**13**

**Title: Museum Store**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Rolfe**

**Key decision: No**

### **Summary**

1. A suitable site for the Museum Store has been identified at the Shire Hill Waste Depot. Planning permission for a 17m<sup>2</sup> two storey building of similar material to the vehicle workshop has been granted. Funding is in place and the tender prepared. Cabinet approval is required to commence the build.

### **Recommendations**

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:
  - a. Agree the principle of building the new store on the Shire Hill depot site.
  - b. Authorise the Director of Corporate Services to issue the design and build tender for the new storage unit at Shire Hill on behalf of the Saffron Walden Museum Society (SWMS).
  - c. Delegate to the Assistant Chief Executive – Legal, Director of Corporate Services and the Executive Member for Communities and Partnerships authority to agree a 999 year lease, with financial contribution, with the SWMS.
  - d. Request the Director of Corporate Services to explore options, as part of the asset management action plan, for the Thaxted Road site that was originally designated as suitable for a Museum Heritage Quest Centre.

### **Financial Implications**

3. A sum of money is available within the Capital Programme with the balance being funded by the SWMS.

### **Background Papers**

None.

### **Impact**

Communication/Consultation	All relevant parties have been consulted either as part of the planning process or as
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	general discussion with Museum staff and waste management
Community Safety	No specific implications
Equalities	An EQIA is appended, there are no issues arising
Health and Safety	No specific implications
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No specific implications
Sustainability	No specific implications
Ward-specific impacts	No specific implications
Workforce/Workplace	Museum staff who currently work some of their time at the current store in Newport will work from the new store when it is built

## Situation

4. The Museum has required a new store for a number of years. The current facility at Newport is inadequate for a number of reasons including size and the risk of flooding. A purpose-built storage facility will allow better organisation of, and access to, the museum's collections which will both free up space in the museum itself and benefit museum visitors.
5. Two sites owned by the council have previously been identified for a replacement store. For a variety of reasons neither of these has developed into a viable location for the store.
  - a. Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden – this was identified as the site of the Museum Heritage Quest Centre. Due to excessive costs around raising site levels and underpinning of the site it became unaffordable.
  - b. Newport Depot – The plan was to replace the existing store by adding an additional floor, raising the ground floor (to reduce any impact from flooding) whilst retaining the same footprint. Initial advice from the Environment Agency was that this would be a viable option; however through subsequent discussions it became apparent that the Environment Agency would in fact be unable to support a planning application.
6. Council officers have also spent time considering commercially available units, but it has not been possible to find a suitable building within the available budget for the project.

7. Following the building of the new vehicle workshop and staff area at Shire Hill a piece of land previously used as the staff canteen and offices was identified as suitable for redevelopment to a Museum Store. Planning permission has been granted for this purpose and a tender prepared.
8. The funding of the building will come from two sources
  - a. Uttlesford has a capital sum available of £73,000 (£45,000 UDC contribution and £28,000 of external funding) and is also supplying all of the staff time in preparing, undertaking and evaluating the tenders, managing the build and delivery of the finished internal arrangements (PCs, cabling, alarms etc).
  - b. SWMS will be providing the remaining funding required. (This will be the majority of the tender cost.)
9. In order for the SWMS to satisfy the requirements of the Charity Commission the council will grant them a 999 year lease for the land on which the store is built. The cost of the lease will be the contribution the SWMS will need to make to the project.
10. The Council has the power to dispose of land in any manner they wish and in this case the proposal is to dispose of it for no consideration. The only constraint is that any disposal must be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable, unless the Secretary of State consents to the sale. However, that consent is not required for a sale at less than best value if the purpose for which the land is to be disposed is likely to contribute to the achievement of the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the local authority's area or part of it, and the difference in value is less than £2 million.
11. The land was valued by Wilks, the council's valuers, on 31 March 2013 at £7,580, and it is unlikely the value will have risen much since then, and certainly not above the £2 million threshold. The Museum store becomes part of the Museum Service and will enhance the public service it can provide. The land is being disposed of for the purpose of enabling the development of a Museum store. This could enable future development of the Museum itself which will contribute to the promotion and improvement of the social wellbeing of the area.
12. With the new store being built on Shire Hill, the original piece of land on Thaxted Road is now available for other uses. The site is effectively scrubland sitting approximately 2 metres below the rest of the site which is owned by Granite. Currently the site is landlocked; however under the terms of relocating the Recycling Centre for Household Waste, UDC entered into an agreement with Granite and Essex County Council (subsequently replaced with a direct agreement between UDC and Granite) that any development of the Granite site must include vehicular access to the UDC site. This access way will be

provided as part of the development of the site. Once the access way is built a new use needs to be found for the site.

13. It is anticipated that the new store will be constructed and operational by the end of the current financial year.

### Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Insufficient funds to build the store	2 (this will be subject to a tender so there is always a chance costs will come in above expectation)	3 (the project would be delayed whilst additional non-council funding is sought by the Saffron Walden Museum Society)	Detailed assessments of the expected cost have been produced and these are within the available budget

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.