

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 6 July 2021

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 21 July 2021

Report of: City Surveyor

Title: Depot Relocation

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

The report updates on the work carried out to date on the potential to amalgamate depot functions at Exton Road by relocating Public and Green Spaces functions from their current location at the Belle Isle Depot. The opportunity has also been taken to address identified issues at the existing Exton Road facilities.

Funding is being sought to now bring forward this project and appoint the professional team necessary to deliver it for the City Council.

2. Recommendations:

That Executive supports and Council approve the allocation of an indicative budget of £3,500,000 to deliver the Depot relocation and improvements at Exton Road Depot.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The amalgamation of depot functions in one location will address the identified welfare and health and safety concerns at both sites at the lowest cost; facilitate additional operational efficiencies in sharing space; and release the Belle Isle depot site for potential redevelopment.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources?

A capital programme resource of up to £3,500,000 will be required to bring forward and deliver the scheme. In addition, officer time will be required in the Corporate Property Unit and the affected operational services to deliver the Client-side functions for the project. Legal services are able to deal with the sale of Belle Isle in house.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

The costs associated with the scheme are noted. This is a significant investment on top of the £37 million capital programme already approved. As it is an investment in property, it is suited to borrowing and an indicative cost would be around £113,000 a year based on

current interest rates. Therefore this has to be viewed as a significant long term solution. Any potential capital receipt would be better suited to financing commitments under the vehicle fleet lease, which will have a better impact on the Council's General Fund position. The additional costs associated with this scheme will add to the savings required to address the budget gap.

6. What are the legal aspects?

None identified

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

Clearly a procurement exercise will have to be followed to appoint the design team and well as the contractor. At this stage, it is anticipated that ECL will undertake this work on behalf of ECC.

8. Report details:

Current position:

The services managed by the Director for Net Zero and City Management are principally operated from two depots. Public and Green Spaces Operations (PGSO) at Belle Isle consists of street scene, parks and cemeteries. Waste Operations at Exton Rd consists of waste collection, the Materials Reclamation Facility (MRF) and some storage of street scene vehicles and waste. The Exton Road facility is shown as the Weighbridge Site and Oakwood House/MRF.

A Health & Safety Report has been carried out at Belle Isle which has identified significant hazards including:

- Inadequate traffic management
- Lack of pedestrian routes and segregation
- Lack of lighting
- Poor fuel and chemical storage
- Asbestos dumping
- Inadequate welfare facilities for staff
- Inadequate first aid facilities
- Poor road conditions
- Fire risk concerns
- Lack of access control

Whilst interim measures have been put in place to improve the situation the facility requires significant investment if it is to be brought up to a fit condition.

The situation at Exton Road is less urgent. However, there are a number of under-utilised buildings, some in poor repair and containing asbestos, and a lack of suitably-located welfare facilities for operational staff (toilets, showers, storage for change of clothes). There is currently spare office capacity at Oakwood House, as this building was designed to accommodate a much larger managerial and administrative workforce and a visitor's reception. Under-utilisation of buildings and land represents a missed opportunity to generate capital receipts or new income streams.

The Ark facility for storage of museum artefacts, also located at Exton Road, is fronted by an area currently planted with grass that could serve as a parking area for staff and for light commercial vehicles. It is assumed that this would be used if City Management services are amalgamated onto the Exton Road site although planning consent for a change of use would be required.

The MRF was built in 2001. Some of the machinery in the plant is nearing the end of its economic life, and Environmental Permitting regulation has become more stringent in recent years. In order to continue cost-effective operation, and to maintain its Environmental Permit, investment is required to improve the on-site arrangements for processing, storage and transfer of waste for recycling at the MRF. This is under consideration separately to this project but the intention is to deliver certain facilitating improvements as part of this exercise.

Options:

The City Surveyor commissioned Kendall Kingscott Consultants to carry out estimates for the costs of resolving the issues at Belle Isle. By estimating for a range of scenarios, it is possible to compare the net costs of retaining and upgrading both the Belle Isle and Exton Road sites with amalgamating City Management services on to one site. The range of scenarios also allows for different options for food waste collection and the management of 'dry' recycling materials to be considered. This provides an element of 'future proofing' against the expansion in vehicle fleet and workforce that would be required for the introduction of food waste recycling

Improving the Belle Isle depot to continue accommodating the current Public & Green Spaces services is estimated to cost £2.3 million. Whilst improving facilities, the issue of site access across a public cycleway for works vehicles, plant and equipment would remain and would require further measures to mitigate the risk of accidents. Our presence as a bad neighbour adjoining a residential housing area will also remain unchanged.

Due to space constraints and other issues identified in the Health & Safety study, amalgamating City Management services at the Belle Isle site is not a realistic option.

The proposed project:

Further to the Executive resolution of 14 November 2017, a Feasibility Report has been produced to consider the relocation of the Public & Green Spaces team from the Belle Isle site to the Exton Road Depot site.

This move has implications on the current use of Exton Road by the Cleansing & Waste team and the MRF which are considered in parallel. There are opportunities to rationalise the use of the Oakwood House/MRF site and the weighbridge site through a more efficient use of the available space. This will involve the demolition of some existing structures which are under-utilised and in poor condition.

The demolition will allow clear site areas for the construction of new facilities to better meet the current needs of the services and to provide an opportunity to deliver some spare capacity for future expansion.

The proposed work areas at Exton Road do have some significant constraints in respect of the adjacent railway, the orientation of the space, the anticipated ground conditions, ecology and the requirement to keep all areas in use during the construction phases. The report addresses these project risks and highlights a mitigation strategy through a series of additional surveys during the next design phases.

The report concludes that the proposals are feasible in the current form, but as it had been necessary to make a number of assumptions. There is a requirement for a detailed analysis and approval of the current brief before proceeding to the next design stage.

The outline project budget which has been estimated as required for the works at Exton Road is estimated at £3,500,000 inclusive of risk, main contractor overhead profits and preliminaries, design team fees, site investigations and statutory fees but exclusive of VAT. This scope includes for the provision of and infrastructure for the extended electrification of the operational fleet.

Clearly, the relocation of Public and Green Spaces onto one site would free up the Belle Isle Depot site. This site could be declared surplus to operational requirements and be promoted for redevelopment.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

The amalgamation of City Management depot functions will assist in the Plan objectives of providing value for money services and leading a well-run Council. The project will deliver an improved efficiency of depot operations and address known health and safety and compliance concerns. It will also release a brownfield site for potential redevelopment opportunities.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

Current safety issues at Belle Isle represent a significant risk of injury to staff and to the reputation of the Council. The measures identified in this report will enable progress to be made to removing these risks through the provision of a safe working environment with appropriate welfare facilities.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because these issues are properly considered and addressed during the design and delivery of the project rather than at inception.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The project brief seeks to rationalise the use of the Oakwood House/MRF site and the Weighbridge site, as well as the RAMM operations in The Ark, through a more efficient use of the available space and infrastructure in order to create a well-integrated site that is flexible and resilient for the years to come. The general principles give consideration of how the vision can materialise in line with the Net Zero Exeter 2030 ambition.

We are also looking to install new infrastructure to facilitate the further electrification of the Council's operational fleet and to link the site up to the new solar farm to be delivered off Clapperbrook Lane.

13. Are there any other options?

We do not feel that there are other options to address the objectives of the scheme. We have considered and rejected re-provision of facilities at Belle Isle and the acquisition of alternative sites. Neither delivers the same benefits as the proposed project

Director Finance, Dave Hodgson

Author: Michael Carson – City Surveyor

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275