



CABINET– 9TH MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SUPPORT HUB AT RHYMNEY LIBRARY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To confirm Cabinet approval for match funding for an application submitted to the Welsh Government Transformation Capital Grants Programme in respect of the creation of a learning/community hub at Rhymney Town Library.
- 1.2 To note the intention for the Library Service to work with Gwent Police to strengthen community engagement through the use of informal settings at Rhymney Library, Risca Library and Caerphilly Library

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 An opportunity has arisen to apply for a Transformation Capital Grant to redevelop Rhymney Town Library as a community learning and support hub. An invitation to apply to Stage 2 was received in early November.
- 2.2 The application requests £162k from the Welsh Government funding on offer. The total refurbishment costs are £289k, meaning that further funding of £127k will need to be identified to enable the project to proceed. The proposed scheme includes the preservation and display of the Idris Davies collection, redesigned layout to both floors, upgraded lift, meeting spaces, community rooms, digital training and video-conferencing facilities, Wi-Fi upgrade, public laptop lounge, a new children's space, Welsh language collection space, access to multiple council services, space for partner use e.g. Gwent Police surgeries, refreshments, and improvements towards the Council's carbon neutrality, including a feasibility study to install electric vehicle charge points in the public car park. £18k has been allocated from Library Service budgets towards the residual funding requirement of £127k and Cabinet is asked to approve a further allocation of £109k to be funded from the council's place-shaping earmarked reserve.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet agree an allocation of £109k from the council's place-shaping earmarked

reserve to ensure that the proposed scheme can progress, subject to confirmation of Welsh Government funding which is expected during the week beginning the 21st March 2022.

- 3.2 To note the intention for the Library Service to work with Gwent Police to strengthen community engagement through the use of informal settings at Rhymney Library, Risca Library and Caerphilly Library.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The creation of a community focussed learning hub at Rhymney Town Library supports the Well-being and Place-shaping Framework aims for:
- Inspiring, achieving, learning
 - Connecting people and places
 - Creating caring communities
- 4.2 The corporate review programme, under the Team Caerphilly transformation programme, is considering a new model for front facing customer services in communities. The proposed development at Rhymney Town Library, as well as joint working at Risca and Caerphilly Libraries, provide an opportunity to explore some of these approaches.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Welsh Government capital grant programme for museums, archives and libraries is intended to enable a more sustainable model of delivery that enhances services to diverse communities, improve collections development and delivers against the Programme for Government and the applicants own organisational priorities.
- 5.2 Rhymney Town Library is a key building in the town centre, situated on the main road with excellent car parking and is well used by the community. The building was constructed in the 1970's and was last refurbished in 2009.
- 5.3 The opportunity to access funding has supported the intentions of the corporate review programme to improve the Council's location and provision of customer facing services, linked to the Well-being and Place-shaping Framework and wider transformation programme.
- 5.4 The objectives of the application are to:
- Redesign the lay-out of the library to improve the customer experience and facilitate greater interaction between local residents, CCBC Departments and external organisations in a trusted and modern building.
 - Create an innovative and sustainable community hub that will become a ground-breaking model for future CCBC projects.
 - Preserve historical and important local history collections for future generations.
 - A heightened Welsh language presence to support the language needs of the borough and work towards helping Wales build a million Welsh speakers,

support the CCBC Welsh Language and WESP Strategies.

- Offering a redesigned library to businesses and partners by providing meeting spaces, learning opportunities and digital inclusion sessions to empower local residents, secure employment, ICT access advice and engage with e-commerce and e-government.
- Combat poverty and social isolation.
- Equip residents with the knowledge, skills and facilities to develop themselves and prosper.
- Encourage well-being to individuals and groups.
- Design flexible community spaces and hold a range of cultural and library projects in order to break down barriers and make culture 'for everyone.'
- Expand the opportunities of children, parents and carers with a modern children's space ensuring the library becomes a chosen destination for families.
- Support our healthcare and police partners.
- Support the climate change agenda through recycling, purchasing eco-friendly equipment and building supplies

5.5 The application includes redesign of both floors with new areas for the Idris Davies collection, Welsh language collection and a new children's area. Reconfiguration plans include digitally enabled meeting rooms for the community, CCBC services and partners. A large community use space on the first floor and a digital training suite with video-conferencing facilities will be provided. An upgrade to the current lift and enhancements to the heating, lighting and insulation of the building along with the provision of electric vehicle charge points in the car park will contribute to the aim of the Council to become carbon neutral by 2030.

5.6 The intention is to use the building to provide access to multiple Council services, and to enable access to public sector partners such as Gwent Police, in addition to library services and the use of the reconfigured rooms for community and hybrid working/meeting space. Digital exclusion is higher in the area than other areas of the county borough and the intention is to provide enhanced broadband, a laptop lounge and video-conferencing facilities which can be used by internal services, external partners, children/young people and local residents.

5.7 In support of the Rhymney Library bid, Gwent Police have stated that they are seeking to reintroduce face to face police surgeries and open evenings from accessible locations such as this in order to maximise the engagement opportunities with communities. The hub will provide an excellent resource for the Police to strengthen community links from a base that is a more welcoming environment than police stations can be perceived be. The Council is also seeking to pilot similar multi-service hub arrangements with public sector partners in other parts of the county borough and is working with Gwent Police on the viability of co-locating officers not just at Rhymney, but also at Caerphilly and Risca Libraries in a pilot arrangement.

5.8 **Conclusion**

The availability of the grant is an opportunity that has presented itself to improve facilities for residents of the Upper Rhymney Valley. Proposals have been developed by Library Services with the input of Building Consultancy, Digital Services, Customer Services, Property Services, and the Policy Team (EV charging). The involvement of Gwent Police and other public sector partners ensures that the Rhymney Library

redevelopment has the potential to deliver a multi-service learning and support hub for the community that enjoys high footfall and provides a wide range of usage.

- 5.9 Should the application be successful an additional £109k will be required to meet the redevelopment costs.
- 5.10 Furthermore, the co-location of Gwent Police at Caerphilly and Risca libraries also provides a firm basis upon which to further enhance the public service offer at these key locations.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The assumptions made within the bid are related to estimated costs at the current time. The application allows reasonable time, given service demands, for the redevelopment to occur with a planned timeline running up until November 2023.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been developed as part of the proposal and was appended to the application to Welsh Government. Its content is equally relevant to this Cabinet report and it is hyperlinked below.

[Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The application has been submitted to Welsh Government requesting an amount of £162k. The total refurbishment costs are £289k, meaning that further funding of £127k will need to be identified to enable the project to proceed. The Library Service will commit £18k and Cabinet is asked to approve a further allocation of £109k to be funded from the council's place-shaping earmarked reserve
- 8.2 The co-location of Gwent Police at Caerphilly and Risca libraries is expected to be achieved with minimal cost. In the event of any associated costs being required, associated funding will be agreed in advance with Gwent Police.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultation responses received have been reflected in this report.
- 10.2 A community consultation was conducted as part of developing the Stage 2 application to understand what service provision was important to the community. This included discussions with local Elected Members, internal services, school partners, a community consultation and discussions and support from external partners e.g. Gwent Police, CAB. The responses have helped shape the bid.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972

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Consultees:

- Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Performance, Economy and Enterprise
- Cllr Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure
- Cllr Carl Cuss, Member for Twyn Carno ward
- Cllr David Harse, Member for Moriah ward
- Cllr John Bevan, Member for Moriah ward
- Cllr Bob Owen, Member for Risca West ward
- Cllr Colin Elsbury, Member for St Martins ward
- Cllr James Fussell, Member for St Martins ward
- Cllr Stephen Kent, Member for St Martins ward
- Temp Assistant Chief Constable Ian Roberts, Gwent Police
- Ed Edmunds, Corporate Director- Education and Corporate Services
- Gareth Jenkins, Head of Children's Services
- Sue Richards, Head of Transformation
- Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
- Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services
- Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
- Karen Pugh, Senior Manager, Libraries