

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024

## CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE - COUNCILLOR MALCOLM LONGLEY

**Report Title** Capital investment in Adults day care service

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### List of Approvers

<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	Catherine Whitehead	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Chief Finance Officer (S.151)</b>	Martin Henry	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Other Director</b>	Simon Bowers, Assistant Director Assets & Environment  Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director Place, Economy & Environment	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Communications Lead/Head of Communications</b>	Bethany Longhurst	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024

### List of Appendices

None.

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for an additional capital budget to enable the relocation of the Adults Day Care facility in Towcester from the Riverside Centre to the Forum, to improve the service offered and create more efficient and effective arrangements.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 1.2 The Council owns and operates the Riverside Resource Centre in Towcester. It is used to provide day care for adults with a range of needs. The service could be improved, and financial benefits achieved, by relocating it to the Forum. The future use of the building will be the subject of a later report.
- 1.3 Works to convert part of the first floor of the Forum would be carried out as part of the Office Optimisation Phase 2 works. They are estimated to cost £0.478m, for which a capital budget would be created.
- 1.4 The outcomes should be beneficial for service users and for the Council's residents/taxpayers as a whole.

## **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet creates an additional capital budget of £0.478m, to be added to the Office Optimisation Phase 2A (Towcester) budget for the purpose of providing facilities at the Forum to enable the Day Care facility to be relocated, and for allied purposes.

## **4. Reason for Recommendations**

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- 4.1 To enable the delivery of better, more efficient and effective services.
- 4.2 To enable the alternative use or disposal of the Riverside Centre site with consequential savings and income generation.

## **5. Report Background**

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- 5.1 The Council operates a facility of the care of adults with a range of needs at the Riverside Centre, Islington Road, Towcester. The number of adults served is small, but their needs are important and no suitable alternative provision has been identified. The building used, the Riverside Centre, is located at the end of Islington Road and is isolated from other Council services. This reduces the ability to offer effective and efficient services for users. The building is also too large for the need and therefore incurs unnecessary levels of cost.
- 5.2 The Council has already decided, as part of its Office Optimisation programme, to reconfigure the Forum, the former South Northamptonshire Council offices in Towcester, into a locality office and Family Hub, retaining the Library Plus. (The building will also remain the base for the Council's Planning service.) The uses proposed do not require all of the building; in particular, on current plans a large part of the first floor will not be required. It was proposed to seek suitable uses for this, including commercial uses. However, it has now been identified that the needs of the users of the Adult day care facility could better be met in the Forum. Not only is the Forum a more modern building with better surroundings, it hosts, and will host, a wide range of WNC and partner services which are complementary to those provided for the adults using the day care facility.

- 5.3 It is therefore proposed that the Office Optimisation programme be amended to incorporate works to enable the relocation of the day care facility to the Forum. The proposals would be designed to secure suitable services for the users, thereby (among other things) helping the Council meet its duty to provide these services, and its duties under the Equality Act 2010 including the public sector equality duty.

## **6. Issues and Choices**

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- 6.1 The main choices open to the Council are as follows.
- 6.2 Option 1: Do nothing. The Adults facility remains in the Riverside Centre. This is clearly possible but would not deliver the benefits of the proposed course of action.
- 6.3 Option 2: Close the facility entirely. This would require the provision of other, less suitable, solutions for the adults who currently use, or in the future need, an Adults day care facility in the Towcester area. This is likely to be both costly and vulnerable to challenge.
- 6.4 Option 3: Acquire or construct a replacement facility other than using the Forum. This is clearly possible but offers no advantages compared to the proposed course of action. In particular, it is likely to reduce, and may remove entirely, the service and financial benefits of the proposal.
- 6.5 Option 4: Proceed with the proposed relocation. This should offer both service and financial benefits, making good use of an existing asset (the Forum).
- 6.6 Thus Option 4 is recommended. It should be noted that, whilst the issues are mentioned for completeness, decisions about the future use (including disposal) of the Riverside Resource Centre site following relocation of the service are not decisions sought by this report.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources and Financial**

- 7.1.1 The Riverside site has a significant value (not stated in this, open, report to avoid compromising the Council's commercial position if a disposal is pursued).
- 7.1.2 Revenue costs which should be saved through the relocation include energy and other utilities, business rates, and ongoing building maintenance, transportation to alternative private providers. These are typically in the order of £37k per year. No material increase in revenue costs at the Forum are expected as a result of the relocation of the service. The cost of the additional borrowing would be c£18k pa which is more than offset by the anticipated revenue savings.

### **7.2 Legal**

- 7.2.1 The Council is a local authority as defined by section 270 of the Local Government Act 1972 and has a general duty under section 1 of the Care Act 2014 to promote the well-being of individuals.

“Well-being” in relation to an individual is defined within the 2014 Act as including participation in work, education, training or recreation, as well as social and economic well-being.

### **7.3 Risk**

7.3.1 The main risks arising from the proposal are as follows.

7.3.2 Risk 1: Costs exceed proposed budget. This risk is managed by sensible estimating, and through inclusion of the works within a wider project, giving opportunities for economies of scale.

7.3.3 Risk 2: Delay beyond expected timescales, as a result of planning, procurement, or construction issues. These would be mitigated by proactive engagement with the Planning service, a well-designed procurement process, and use of the project management methodology with regular project boards at which progress, risks, and issues are directly addressed.

### **7.4 Consultation and Communications**

7.4.1 The current users of the centre and their families/carers will be consulted on the proposed move and on the design of the facilities to be created at the Forum.

### **7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 None.

### **7.6 Climate Impact**

7.6.1 The works to relocate the day centre will inevitably have some climate impact, as the materials used and construction activities will result in the emission of carbon into the atmosphere. However, the closure of the Riverside Centre will remove carbon emissions from use, moving the service into a building which is more modern and efficient. Thus over time the climate impact should be positive.

7.6.2 No other environmental impacts appear likely to be material. Work within the Forum will not materially affect its surroundings. The closure of the Riverside Centre may result in the site ultimately being redeveloped, but this would be managed via the planning system in the usual way. This includes measures to manage any local environmental impacts.

### **7.7 Community Impact**

7.7.1 The scheme should result in better service provision for those Adults using it.

7.7.2 Currently the Riverside Resource Centre is being used on a temporary basis by the Towcester Foodbank. This use was only a temporary arrangement, although its value is recognised. If such temporary arrangements prevented the Council making best use of its assets (including disposing of them), this would prevent the Council from enabling such temporary uses despite their benefits. This would clearly be undesirable. In this case the future of the building, and any provision for the Foodbank, will be the subject of later decisions.

## **8. Background Papers**

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8.1 None.