

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

22 October 2013

Subject: Enabling the South Wiltshire University Technical College

Cabinet member: Cllr Toby Sturgis, Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste.

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with the opportunity to consider three specific aspects of Wiltshire Councils' commitment to the development of a South Wiltshire University Technical College (UTC) in Salisbury.

The first aspect is consideration of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Police, the Wiltshire and Swindon Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the UTC. This memorandum is attached as Appendix A and outlines the proposed framework that all parties will work within to enable the UTC to be developed on part of the existing Wilton Road Police Station site. Like all Police estate within Wiltshire this site is owned by the Police and Crime Commissioner, but the proposal is also supported by the Chief Constable, thus the multi-partner basis of the MoU.

The second aspect is to ask Cabinet to confirm that, in order to enable the delivery of the UTC on this site (and thus drawing down a £7.5million investment by the Education Funding Agency), it wishes officers of Wiltshire Council to undertake all required work to develop the most cost effective financial package to enable the purchase of the required element of the Wilton Road Police Station site by Wiltshire Council. An independent valuation of this element of the site, jointly commissioned by Wiltshire Council and the PCC, confirmed a suitable purchase price would be in the region of £2 million.

The final aspect of the report is to ask Cabinet to note that Wiltshire Council officers are working with officers of both the PCC and Wiltshire Police to identify, secure and provide a modern and sustainable Custody Suite to serve Salisbury and the south of the county. Officers will also support Wiltshire Police in the development and delivery of a long term estate plan for the county.

Proposal:**That Cabinet:**

- 1. approve the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Police, the PCC and UT;**
- 2. request officers to develop the most cost effective funding package to enable the delivery of the UTC on the Wilton Road Police Station site, delegating this to Dr Carlton Brand, in consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, the Section 151 Officer and Councillor Sturgis and Councillor Tonge and**
- 3. note and support the work being undertaken by officers to support the development and delivery of the PCC's and Wiltshire Police's long term estates strategy.**

Reason for Proposal

To approve the proposed MoU, confirm the council's position in relation to the proposed purchase of an element of the Wilton Road Police Station site and note the work regarding the police estate that is being undertaken by Wiltshire Council officers. This work and proposal will enable the delivery of the UTC in Salisbury with new educational places for 600 young people, working with the Army and local business, securing a September 2015 opening and secure an investment of the £7.5million by the Education Funding Agency to deliver this.

Dr Carlton Brand
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

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Key Decision: Yes

Purpose of Report

1. To enable Cabinet to consider the proposed MoU, confirm its position in relation to the proposed purchase of an element of the Wilton Road Police Station site and note the work regarding the police estate that is being undertaken by Wiltshire Council officers.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The business plan is focused on enhancing the economy of Wiltshire and of supporting this via the enhancement and delivery of the skills and opportunities that our economy will require in the future. The business plan commits the council to work with partners across the public and private sector to enhance opportunity and improve delivery.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. South Wiltshire UTC is an independent charitable trust that will govern and deliver a UTC based within the City of Salisbury. A UTC is a new type of technical college specifically for 14 – 18 year olds offering a first class academic and practical education where employer identified skills will be developed.

4. South Wiltshire UTC will be open from 8.45am to 5.10pm for 40 weeks a year. This gives much more teaching time than most schools and ensures the development of practical employment focused skills as well as GCSEs and A Levels. The UTC is backed by the University of Southampton, 43 (Wessex) Brigade, Wiltshire College and by many of the area's world class employers.

5. National Government, via the Education Funding Agency (DfE), has already contributed £300,000 to the project development costs of the UTC's pre-opening phase and will make a further contribution of around £7.5m to the refurbishment, extension and equipping of the Wilton Road site in order to prepare it for

opening. However, in order to secure this additional national funding and the opening of the UTC by September 2015 it is now essential to identify confirmed site availability for the UTC.

6. After considering a range of sites and their deliverability the UTC Board identified that the Wilton Road Police Station site was their preferred option for delivery. The PCC and Chief Constable have identified that this site can be made available, subject to the meeting of their duties to achieve full value for money from property disposals in order that they may invest in more suitable long term accommodation for Wiltshire Police within Salisbury including delivery of a modern, sustainable custody suite to service the City and wider area.

7. Nationally, the development of UTCs has focused on surplus or under-utilised public estate and indeed the initial funding agreement with Central Government requires local partners to do all they can to explore local public sector estate options. The UTC has some specific requirements primarily around funding availability, transport links, deliverability of an opening date of September 2015 that mean that the council's own land holdings within the City are unsuitable for the UTC. The proposed site of Wilton Road Police Station will particularly support the UTC's green transport plans and its intention to offer a sub-regional educational resource, reducing its potential to impact on any one local secondary school in particular.

8. In order to bring forward the UTC, the council needs to consider whether or not it believes that an initial investment by it of approximately £2 million represents good value for money in relation to its business plan aims and the securing of £7.5 million of central government funds to deliver an operational UTC by September 2015.

9. This investment would not only secure the UTC, but would be the first step in the delivery of the PCC's commitment within his Police and Crime plan to ensure the delivery of a modernised and sustainable estates platform for Wiltshire Police and the much publicised commitment by him and the Chief Constable to ensure the delivery of a modern, sustainable and cost effective custody provision with the City. This investment will also ensure that the UTC is delivered from an iconic public building within the City of Salisbury, which has excellent transport links and would remove the possibility that as and when Wiltshire Police vacate the site, it remains vacant and unused for a period of time.

10. Considerable work is required by officers to determine the most cost effective way of funding the required £2 million outlay by the Council. It is likely to be via a mixture of sources that could include Section 106 payments towards educational provision, Community Infrastructure Levy contributions towards the custody suite or reduced cost access to council estate by the Police. Whilst officers have undertaken some initial work, further work is only sensible if Cabinet are committed to the delivery of the UTC on the Wilton Road Police Station site and the MoU attached to this paper as Appendix A.

Background

11. Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Police and the PCC have been strong supporters of the UTC proposal for Salisbury City.

12. The UTC offers the opportunity to secure a new format of educational approach for Wiltshire and the City of Salisbury, it is not only supported by Southampton University, but also many of the County's most well known employers and agencies, such as dstl, QinetiQ, Public Health England) and the leadership and teamworking skills of the students that attend the UTC will be developed by the 43 (Wessex) Brigade. Although not a military focused school, UTC has been welcomed by military personnel due to the nature of the curriculum as well as specialist teaching or employment opportunities.

13. As can be seen from the proposed MoU, the Chief Constable and PCC are clear that the relocation of Police delivery from the Wilton Road Police Station is something they support and are working collectively with the Council to deliver. The required decant dates of Police staff to secure the opening of the UTC by September 2015 have been identified, and agreed, within the MoU.

14. Wiltshire Council officers have been supporting the delivery of the UTC since its inception and are represented on the UTC Board, and the Council has publically identified its commitment to working with partners to ensure delivery of the UTC by 2015.

15. Should members commit to the initial funding of £2 million to secure the Wilton Road site for the UTC, then an agreed work programme and timeline already exists for delivery of the UTC by September 2015. The EFA have developed a standard contracting model for UTC delivery; whereby whilst the contract will be nominally 'held' by Wiltshire Council, delivery will be by contractors appointed via a competitive process by the Education Funding Agency and it is suggested that day to day project delivery should rest with them and the UTC Project Manager.

Safeguarding Implications

16. The UTC will provide school places in a safe environment for children in the immediate locality whilst securing academic and vocational opportunities that are currently not available to them. The location of the UTC on the Wilton Road site provides opportunities for safe travel using public routes with the train station in close proximity along with main bus routes. The development plans for the UTC also show clear and safe points for car users to access the site.

Public Health Implications

17. Educational attainment is linked to improved health and wellbeing outcomes in later life making the provision of sufficient school places for the growing population key to improving outcomes for our young people. The proposal will allow children and young people to access specialist education in the Salisbury area supporting the potential for use of active travel to and from school. This development provides the opportunity for young people in the community to participate in vocational and skills based activities and thereby promote healthy behaviours and practices to ensure the population stay healthy and ensure health resilience.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

18. Both the refurbished UTC and modernised police estate platform envisaged within the PCC Police and Crime Plan will offer increased sustainability and reduced environmental impacts.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

19. None at this time. Additionally, any development or relocation required as a consequence of these proposals will have an individual equality impact assessments undertaken

Risk Assessment

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

20. Should Cabinet not wish to proceed with the proposals within this report, it is unlikely that the UTC will be delivered by September 2015 and both the educational opportunity and the approximate central government funding of £7.5 million are likely to be lost to Wiltshire and the City of Salisbury. If the UTC is not delivered in Salisbury, the nearest UTC to Wiltshire will be Swindon. If Hampshire or Southampton then deliver a UTC in the future, it will draw young people from Wiltshire and impact on employment and skills in the county.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

21. There is only one major financial risk to the council at this time, as delivery of the UTC will be underwritten by the EFA funding package. The risk is that officers may fail to identify suitable funding sources to repay to the council the entire sum (or aggregate package) made available to the PCC in recompense for the required element of the Wilton Road Police Station site. This would leave the council in a position where it needed to utilise capital borrowing to offset a cost of up to £2 million. Officers are working to reduce this maximum exposure at this time.

22. Officers from the Council's education and skills team and economy and enterprise teams have been involved both in the inception of the UTC and this report as have a range of other council officers. Deliver failure of the UTC would therefore have reputational impacts for the council.

Financial Implications

23. There is a maximum financial expose to the council of £2 million within these proposals. Finance staff will be involved in the build up of the required funding package and the proposed delegation is such that the advice of the Section 151 Officer will be sought prior to its conclusion.

24. Once the purchase of the site has been completed, ownership will remain with Wiltshire Council but a long term, full repairing lease will be granted to the

UTC on a peppercorn basis similar to the approach taken to leases for academies.

Legal Implications

24. Legal staff will be involved in the process of any purchase, most notably in completing the standard due diligence checks undertaken by the council for any asset purchase.

25. Planning permission for the refurbishment will be sought directly by the UTC and delivery of the build requirements will be undertaken by a contractor directly appointed by the EFA. The council will be the 'nominal' contract holder for this, and will offer any support required to the UTC Project Manager.

26. The proposals within this report fall within the council's legal powers to deliver.

Options Considered

27. Extensive work has been undertaken by officers across the council in relation to the UTC. Alternative sites have been considered but they do not meet the deliverability timescales nor offer the certainty required to ensure opening of the UTC by September 2015, which is a requirement if the funding of approximately £7.5million is to be secured.

28. Not supporting the UTC development was considered by officers, but this would clearly not meet long term educational need in the south of the county, nor assist and enable the councils' business plan aspirations.

Conclusions

15. Cabinet are asked to consider this reports recommendations.

Dr Carlton Brand
Corporate Director

Report Author:

Mark Stone, Service Director, Transformation

14 October 2013

Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices

