

HIGHAM FERRERS LIBRARY
EXTRAORDINARY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
17th JANUARY 2018

PURPOSE

- To receive an update on information in connection with the possible closure of the Library.
- To agree to set up a working party.
- To consider whether to hold a public meeting.
- To consider whether to commission a condition report and valuation of the building and agree a budget for the work.
- An opportunity for Councillors to raise question and ideas for consideration by the working party.

BACKGROUND

Northamptonshire County Council is consulting on changes to the Library and Information Service in order to make cuts to their budget. Under option 2 and 3 Higham Ferrers Library will close. Under option 1 there will be the opportunity to have a community managed library. At the meeting on 18th December the Town Council agreed to submit an informal expression of interest.

The cabinet will consider their recommendation 13th February with a final decision by the full council on 22nd February.

CONSULTATION

The Town Council have been undertaking consultation within Higham Ferrers both online and by hard copy which was circulated to every house with the Rushden Reporter at the beginning of December. The closing date was 22nd December.

Summary of Results

Number of responses ó 423

- Do you use the Library? ó Yes 85.5% No 14.5%
- Would you like the Library to stay open? ó Yes ó 95%, No - 3 %, No Opinion ó 2%
- What facilities do you use? Borrow Books ó 84%, Use Reference Library ó 40%, Use Computers ó 25%, Attend a class- 27%, Hire rooms ó 5%, Other 15%
- Would you support a Council Tax increase in region of 58p per week? Yes 80%, No 13%, No Opinion 7%
- Would you be willing to help as a volunteer ó Yes 129 people

Text comments have previously been circulated and the recent responses are similar.

BUILDING AND COSTS

The property has now been valued by Northamptonshire County Council at £367,500 with a lease value of £33000pa. No lease terms have been received and these have been requested along with the following information:-

- Copy of a condition survey of the building.
- Copy of the valuation report.
- Details of who carried out the valuation.
- Valuation for insurance purposes.
- Copy of any maintenance record for the building.
- Copy of the last electrical check.
- Copy of the Title Deeds so we can see if there are any covenants on the building.
- Age of the boiler.
- Details of the usage for electric and gas for a year and the current tariff?
- Copy of the fixtures and fittings that will be handed over?

Cost of borrowing:-

£360,000 - Over 25 years £19585.10pa on an annuity basis Interest rate 2.56%

£400,000 ó Over 25 years -£21761.22pa on an annuity basis ó Interest Rate ó 2.56%

Alternatively the Council could reconsider selling 5 College Street to cover some of the cost.

WORKING PARTY

It is recommended that a working party be set up to support the Clerk on the project.

Terms of Reference.

- To research and consider possible organisational structures for managing the library for recommendation to full council.
- To consider options for use of the accommodation. e.g. Town Hall offices for agreement by The Town Council.
- To liaise with other stakeholders.
- To explore possible income streams.
- To review condition survey and work required.
- To review costs of running the building.
- To look at other community managed libraries

PUBLIC MEETING

Do the Council want to call a Public meeting to see whether there is any appetite for a community group being formed to run the library? Raunds Town Council are looking at buying the building and leasing the building on a peppercorn rent to a community group and helping with other funding.

CONDITION REPORT AND VALUATION

Even though the County Council may decide to pursue option 2 or 3, where the Library will be closed, there will be an option for the community to buy the building at a later date as it is registered as an 'Asset of Community Value'. Therefore it may be prudent to obtain a condition survey and independent valuation or at least be ready to commission one after 22nd February. No costs are known but a £2000 budget is suggested, although it is anticipated to be in the region of £1000 or less.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

- To receive and note the report.
- To agree to establish a working party and agree who will be members and the terms of reference,
- To agree whether to hold a public meeting.
- To set a budget of £2000 for the Library project and to agree that a condition survey and valuation be commissioned.