

**Report to:** Lead Member for Resources

**Date:** 21 June 2018

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title of report:** Willingdon Community Library

**Purpose of report:** To seek Lead Member approval to grant a full repairing and insuring lease to Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council on a peppercorn rent for a five year period, in order to operate a Community Library in the former Willingdon Library building.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The Lead Member is recommended to:

**(1) approve the granting of a full repairing and insuring lease to Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council on a peppercorn rent for a five year period, in order to operate a Community Library in the former Willingdon Library building; and**

**(2) delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to agree the terms for the lease.**

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## **1 Background Information**

1.1 At its meeting of 6 March 2018, Cabinet approved the revised Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy, following a 12 week period of public consultation. As part of the overall Strategy, Langney, Mayfield, Ore, Pevensey Bay, Polegate, Ringmer and Willingdon libraries and the Mobile Library closed on 5 May 2018.

1.2 Cabinet agreed to give delegated authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive, to consider any viable community proposals to take over the running of the seven closed libraries or the Mobile Library, and to enter into appropriate agreements on behalf of ESCC.

## **2. Supporting information**

2.1 Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council's (WJPC) proposal is to create a volunteer-led community library in the former Willingdon Library building in Coppice Avenue, Lower Willingdon, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 9PN. The aim is to set up a charity to run the library, which would take over from WJPC. As with all of the community libraries, this would not be part of ESCC's statutory library provision and would not be branded as an ESCC library. The freehold of the former Willingdon Library building is owned by the County Council. A location plan is provided as Appendix 1.

2.2 WJPC have proposed a fully-repairing and insuring peppercorn lease arrangement for the building and a selection of stock, and the fixtures and fittings currently in the library for five years.

2.3 The panel set up to evaluate the Community Library proposals (comprising the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport and the Assistant Chief Executive) has reviewed the proposal and its supporting business case, and assessed it to be viable. A copy of the panel's evaluation report is attached as Appendix 2.

2.4 It is estimated that the site of the former Willingdon Library has a freehold value with planning permission for residential use of approximately £100,000 - £125,000. The annual commercial rental value of the building is estimated to be in the order of £8,000. This would also require planning permission for change of use, and the types of commercial uses for which planning permission would be granted may be limited, given the largely residential surroundings.

### **3. Conclusions and reasons for recommendations**

3.1 Granting a five year peppercorn lease to WJPC to operate a Community Library in the former Willingdon Library building would represent a potential loss of rental income to the County Council of £40,000 over the five year period. Granting the lease instead of an immediate sale of the site would also defer a capital receipt of around £100,000 - £125,000. However, the option would remain for the County Council at the end of the lease period to sell the freehold or to consider an alternative use of the site.

3.2 The WJPC proposal would provide social value to the community in Willingdon and is judged by the evaluation panel to be viable. Granting a short-term peppercorn lease is in line with the Cabinet decision of 6 March 2018.

3.3 It is therefore recommended that Lead Member for Resources approve the grant of a full repairing and insuring lease to WJPC on a peppercorn rent for a five year period, in order to operate a Community Library in the former Willingdon Library building, and delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to agree the terms for the lease.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Stephen Potter

Tel. No. 01273 336520

Email: [stephen.potter@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.potter@eastsussex.gov.uk)

#### LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Stephen Shing

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Update on the Libraries Transformation Programme – revised Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy, 2018/19 to 2022/23, Report to Cabinet 6 March 2018.