

SUBJECT:	Former Abergavenny Library
DIRECTORATE:	CYP / Resources
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	6th November 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

This report is brought forward to declare surplus the Former Abergavenny Library, transferring from the CYP portfolio to Landlord Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet agrees the following:

- (i) That the former Abergavenny Library transfer from the CYP portfolio to Landlord Services.
- (ii) That Landlord Services invite proposals for the leasing or purchase of the site in accordance with the policy objectives of the Asset Management Strategy.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

3.1 The Former Abergavenny Library was closed in 2014/15, with the library relocated following completion of the development of the new hub at the Abergavenny Town Hall. In the subsequent years, the former library has been utilised for a number of services including Adult Education and most recently MCC's Pupil Referral Service (PRS).

3.2 Whilst the PRS has managed to utilise the accommodation for several years, the increase in service users along with the Council's commitment to develop new PRS provisions in the north and the south of the county, the Pupil Referral Service are vacating the former library to relocate to the Bryn-Y-Cwm property on Old Hereford Road, Abergavenny.

3.3 The current accommodation in the old library does not enable delivery of the Curriculum for Wales and does not have appropriate facilities in terms of intervention/ break out spaces to enable adults to support young people to regulate their emotions when in crisis, or to access planned therapeutic support and intervention

3.4 The proposed accommodation will provide dedicated teaching and learning spaces for pupils along with specialist art, science, and life skills areas. There will be areas for outside learning and therapeutic support and intervention. Pupils will be taught in a safe and secure environment. There will also be dedicated space for teaching staff to deliver EOTAS provision and enable them to collaborate more effectively.

- 3.5 All users of the Bryn Y Cwm site have been relocated elsewhere apart from the Youth Centre which will remain on site. This will enable the Youth Service to work more closely with pupils using the PRS and enhance the service currently provided.
- 3.6 The permanent dedicated site at Bryn Y Cwm, will also enable pupils currently located at the Attik in Monmouth to come together on one site and to benefit from the combined skills and expertise of dedicated PRS staff who are currently working across the two sites.
- 3.7 By vacating the former library, an opportunity is created to explore alternative uses for the property including letting or disposal. Declaring the site surplus and transferring the asset to the portfolio of Landlord Services will enable officers to explore opportunities to generate a financial return and maximise social benefit.
- 3.8 The property itself is located on Library Square, Abergavenny and consists of a combination of two large ground floor rooms and first floor smaller meeting/classrooms and kitchen spaces. The property condition is reasonable considering its age. Any occupier will need to invest in the site, as well as adhere to the listed building status.
- 3.9 The property is subject to a restrictive covenant that reduces the number of potential uses, namely that of a public house, restaurant or hot-food takeaway. The covenant does not prevent the property being used for commercial or community uses.
- 3.10 Landlord Services will market the opportunity, and invite offers for the site. Any decision to award a tender would be presented before Cabinet, with any recommendation based on an evidence-based scoring criteria, in accordance with the Council's Asset Management Strategy. It is proposed that marketing would commence in early December with a further report to Cabinet, subject to offers received, in February-March 2025.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION:

- 4.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken, attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 A summary from Section 8 of the Integrated Impact Assessment identifying the significant positive and negative impacts is detailed below.

Positive Impact

- The proposal will enable an underutilised asset to be repurposed.
- The proposal to offer the site for community or commercial use will enhance the availability of opportunities that are open, accessible and of interest to people of all ages and abilities.
- This proposal will strengthen and widen the opportunities available to people in a way that meets their needs. Therefore, likely to increase and advance equality of opportunity for people with disabilities in Monmouthshire.
- The proposal may enable people with learning disabilities / physical disabilities and mental health issues to access a new community initiative within a well-known property in Abergavenny.

Negative Impacts

- The creation of a further facility in close proximity to a number of existing community assets may negatively impact the sustainability of existing community facilities.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefits	Risks	Recommendation
Do not declare the site surplus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the property would be vacant, the property would be retained for the delivery of other council services should the need arise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the property falls into disrepair and remains underutilized, in conflict with the commitments of the Asset Management Strategy to maximise the use of property. • The property would continue to result in costs to MCC through utilities and business rates. 	
Declare the site surplus and advertise for prospective occupiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The property could generate a financial return. • The property is a well-known asset and is suitable for a range of different commercial or community uses. • MCC would offset any ongoing running costs associated with the asset. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That no offers are received for the property. • That the property fails to be repurposed and remains vacant. • The property requires investment to repurpose, which may prohibit our ability to identify a user or introduce capital costs to MCC. 	Recommended the site is declared surplus and transferred to Landlord Services to advertise.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Landlord Services will be responsible for assessing the merits of proposals received for the property and evaluating the extent to which they can be delivered or are sustainable alternative uses.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 The Pupil Referral Services have relocated from the property to the Bryn-Y-Cwm building and the asset is currently vacant.
- 7.2 The property lends itself to a range of different uses and has potential to generate a financial return to MCC. Maximising the use of property that is under-utilised features in the principles of the Council's Asset Management Strategy.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The annual running costs (utilities and business rates) of the former library at the time of occupation was approximately £24,000 per annum. Whilst MCC will not be incurring these costs since the property has been vacated, MCC will continue to incur holding

costs (standing charges, business rates) until liability is transferred (via lease or transfer).

8.2 Relocation of the Pupil Referral Service to the Bryn-Y-Cwm has not resulted in additional costs to MCC.

8.3 MCC would generate a rental for hire of the property, as well as offset any ongoing holding costs (business rates and utilities) which would be met by the tenant.

9. CONSULTEES:

- CYP Directorate Management Team
- Landlord Services
- John Rogers, MCC Legal Services
- Lucinda Boyland – Community Development and Delivery Manager

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 – Redline Plan

12. AUTHOR:

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