

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING - 13 AUGUST 2018

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

TOWN CENTRE HUB CONCEPT & LIKELY COSTS

BACKGROUND

At the extra-ordinary Town Council meeting on 12 Jun the Council decide not to appoint a Town Warden to help report anti-social behaviour in the Town. The Council decided to explore with Cornwall Council and the BID, the idea of collocating Cornwall Council ASB staff with the Penzance BID Manager and a possible future Town Centre Manager in a prominent Town Centre location. It was resolved that the Town Council would explore the job description/person specification for the post and present proposals at the next Town Council meeting.

Council officers have since visited Falmouth to understand the role of the Falmouth Town Centre Manager who is colocated with the Falmouth BID Manager. The conclusion was that the Penzance Town Manager role would be substantially different from the Falmouth Town Manager's role which was heavily focussed on town centre events and 'destination management'. As there was substantial uncertainty over the Penzance Town Manager's role, it was accepted that recruitment for the post should be delayed until the role became clearer.

DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN HUB CONCEPT

The original stimulus for a Town Centre Hub (office) was Cornwall Council's recognition that increasing the number of ASB officers was unrealistic but re-locating its two West Cornwall ASB Officers from Tolvaddon to Penzance would improve responsiveness because approximately 60% of their time was spent on Penzance issues (the remainder being St Ives and Camborne issues). Re-location to Penzance would also aid partnership working with the Police, Addaction and Breadline, Penzance BID and Penzance Town Council. Sharing accommodation with the Penzance BID Manager was seen as a way to encourage partnership working and share accommodation costs – a necessary consideration given Cornwall Council's tight budget constraints.

Certain Penzance Town Councillors have made the case for closer cooperation between the Town Council and Penzance BID. The BID raises approximately £150,000 annually towards Town Centre initiatives and many of these initiatives (e.g. hanging baskets in Market Jew St/Prom) are popular with the public and not just the business community. The BID Manager plays an important role coordinating projects funded by the Penzance Regeneration Partnership, a role the Town Council would be expected to perform in the absence of a Penzance BID. It can be convincingly argued that it is in the Council's interest to support Penzance BID which is due for renewal in Jun 20 subject to a successful referendum.

There are two other issues which have a bearing on the new Town Centre Hub:

- a. Public Realm Problem Reporting. Ever since the dissolution of Penwith District Council, Penzance residents have expected the Town Council to pursue problems with Penzance's public realm irrespective of whether or not the issue is a Town Council responsibility. The Town Council has difficulty 'washing its hands' of responsibility without damaging its reputation. Residents expect the Town Council to use its influence on their behalf to solve problems. A recent example has been the public's concern over anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre. The Town Centre Hub can be part of the solution in meeting the public's expectations. It will be a convenient reporting point for 'public realm issues' whether they be aggressive begging, broken public benches or flyposting.
- b. Coordination with Voluntary Groups. Penzance Town Council relies on voluntary and community groups like the Flora Group and Street Pastors to fill gaps in public provision. This reliance is expected to grow as Cornwall Council continues to reduce spending and off loads services on to the Town Council which needs economical solutions to avoid major hikes in its Council Tax precept. The Town Centre Hub would have an important role working with such groups and supporting them.

PROPOSED ACCOMMODATION

No 1 Causewayhead has been identified by Cornwall Council and the BID as the most suitable accommodation option. Town Council officers have toured the accommodation. The premises have the advantage of looking out over the bottom of Causewayhead, a known trouble spot. The accommodation comprises:

Basement Room (proposed meeting room – 12 persons)

Ground Floor (the 'shop') – reception for public and hot desk space

First Floor – Office space

Second Floor – Optional additional floor with office space for partner organizations.

Full property details can be found here <http://charterwood.com/?ref=3581>.

The basement, ground floor and first floor are available for £13,000/year. The second floor is currently a vacant residential flat but is being considered for inclusion for an additional sum of rent (TBC). The proposed leasing and cost share arrangements are:

- a. Cornwall Council to lease for 3 to 5 years with a 12 month option to end the lease early.

- b. The BID and Penzance Town Council to have licences to occupy the property. Rationale: encourage partnership working (no fiefdoms) and to avoid unnecessary legal costs (BID can only commit for 20 months occupation).
- c. Rent, legal/surveyor costs, utilities and set up costs to be split 3 ways equally.
- d. Rates (~£6000 p.a.) to be split between Penzance Town Council and Cornwall Council on a 50/50 basis. Rationale: BID would be entitled to 100% Small Business Rate Relief if given a sub-lease for office space (it is not possible for the BID to take the lease and claim 100% rate relief on the whole property).
- e. Communications fit required + office equipment/furniture.

Estimated budget impact:

2018/9 budget: (6 months) Rent ~£2,700, Rates £1,500, utilities £450, + set up/fit out costs/maintenance ~£4,000)

2019/20 (12 months) Rent £5,400, rates £3,000, utilities £700, + maintenance

PROPOSED STAFFING

The two Cornwall Council ASB officers and the BID Manager are frequently out of their offices which raises the issue of how to provide a reliable service to the Public for say 30 hrs/week. The interim solution being considered is for Penzance Town Council to fund Penzance BID to pilot a Town Centre Coordinator/Hub Office Manager post for the remaining 20 months of the BID life (1 Oct 18 – 31 May 20).

This arrangement has the advantages of ease of implementation and flexibility which is important given that the role is likely to evolve. The post will automatically disappear if Penzance BID is not renewed beyond May 2020 but the Town Council would have the options of continuing the post as a Council post or creating a new Council post with a different job description. With the BID as the employer there would be no requirement to enrol the employee in the Local Government Pension Scheme (~25% of salary).

Likely salary £21,000 - £22,000 plus training and other employer's costs (estimate ~£26,000)

Estimated budget:

2018/9 budget: £13,000

2019/20 budget: £26,000

CONCLUSION

There have been significant issues managing anti-social behaviour in Penzance Town Centre and the underlying problem of reduced Police numbers is unlikely to be resolved. The Town Council has decided not to pursue a Town Warden solution because the lack of legal powers raises questions of effectiveness. Cornwall Council is however keen to relocate ASB staff to Penzance so they can be more responsive and work more collaboratively with local Police, the BID and other partners. Penzance Town Council has an interest in making this innovation work both because of the importance of community safety and need to make the Penzance BID a success if it is to continue funding projects and a BID Manager beyond June 2020. The creation of a Town Centre Hub is a significant innovation and its success is important to residents, the Town Council, Cornwall Council and the Police.

Penzance Town Council has a political need to support this innovative solution. It is proposed the Town Council does so by accepting approximately one third of the accommodation costs and by funding a Town Centre Coordinator/Officer Manager post as a pilot post (as an employee of the BID) for the remaining 20 months of the life of Penzance BID.

Members thoughts are welcome on this issue in advance of the next full Town Council meeting.

Prepared by Cllr. Dick Cliffe