

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 September 2011

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Gagan Mohindra
(Finance and Economic Development)

Item:

1. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE – REDEVELOPMENT OF THE TOILET BLOCK IN BAKERS LANE, EPPING

Recommending:

That, a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £5,000 be approved for 2011/12 to enable the engagement of consultants to prepare and submit a planning application for the redevelopment of the toilet block in Bakers Lane, Epping for use as a restaurant/take away service.

1. The District Council is the freehold owner of the land on which the traditional toilet block is situated in Bakers Lane to the rear of the Marks and Spencer store on High Street, Epping. The toilets are let to and maintained by Epping Town Council.
2. The building is traditional brick construction with a pitched and tiled roof and is in need of substantial repair. A detailed survey has not been undertaken but a professional view is that refurbishment of the whole block to bring it up to modern day standards would cost in the region £20,000 - £30,000.
3. Adjacent to the traditional toilet block is a Universal Superloo (USL). The District Council has an agreement with Messrs J C Decaux to provide four USL toilets throughout the District located at Bakers Lane, Epping; Quaker Lane, Waltham Abbey; Brook Path, Loughton; and The Broadway, Loughton. The Council also has an agreement with the company to provide one Automatic Public Convenience (APC) in Queen's Road, Buckhurst Hill. The agreement for the USL's is for 20 years until 2024 and the agreement for the APC is for 15 years which ends on 28 September 2012. Under the terms of the agreement for the APC the Council has to give 18 month's notice to terminate and if not the term automatically renews for 5 years. In order to safeguard the Council's position notice has been served in respect of the APC.
4. The lease cost of the USL in Bakers Lane, Epping is £28,933 per annum and increases annually in line with the Retail Price Index.
5. We are proposing that the toilet block be converted to a restaurant/take away and the adjacent USL be removed to Queen's Road, Buckhurst Hill to replace the existing APC. This proposal will reduce the current maintenance and lease cost to the District Council and Epping Town Council and result in valuable additional income from the restaurant/take away service.

6. It is estimated that the District Council will save £18,016 in lease charges currently paid to J C Decau for the APC at Queen's Road. The proposed redevelopment is estimated to add between £10,000 and £15,000 per annum to the District Council's rental income and the redevelopment of the traditional toilets would save the Town Council £6,000 per annum in running and maintenance costs, and remove the liability for dilapidations.
7. It is proposed that the public will have access to the toilet facilities in the new development and that these will be open for at least the same hours as the present toilets.
8. Preliminary advice from the Council's advisers, has been positive about the demand for a restaurant/take away facility in Epping and interest has already been conveyed by at least one major food outlet franchise.
9. In order to progress our proposals we are seeking a supplementary capital estimate to engage consultants to prepare and submit a planning application for the redevelopment of the toilet block for use as a restaurant/take away service.
10. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.