

46/05 – LIBRARY GARDENS HARROGATE – NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – FAMILY HISTORY/ DISCOVERY CENTRE:

The Head of Parks and Open Spaces submitted a written report on a proposal by the North Yorkshire County Council for the development of the existing library site on Victoria Avenue, Harrogate in order to, subject to the necessary planning approvals, include a Family History / Discovery Centre. The facility would serve the whole of the North Yorkshire sub-region, bringing archives and local study materials to a new and broader audience through easy accessibility in a welcoming environment in a town centre location. In order to provide the extended facility, the development of part of the land adjacent to the site in the Council's ownership and currently occupied by an air quality monitoring station, a toilet block and an electricity sub-station would be required. The impact on the adjoining ornamental rose garden was considered minimal with the proposals having the benefit of an envisaged access to the gardens from the new facility. Approval in principle to the proposals was sought in order that the County Council could appoint architectural consultants to develop the scheme in detail which would be placed before Members at a later date.

In response to questions from Cabinet, the Head of Parks and Open Spaces agreed to discuss with the County Council the possibility of it holding a public participation exercise / display in the existing library on the proposed Family History / Discovery Centre.

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That (1) approval in principle to progress the scheme for the provision of the proposed NYCC Family History / Discovery Centre be given subject to planning approval;

(2) once all conditions have been met and the scheme developed in more detail, a further report be brought to Cabinet for a final decision;

(3) officers work with NYCC to develop the scheme and negotiate terms and conditions with regard to the development of the land to the west of Library Gardens;

(4) officers work with NYCC to explore new ways of working in partnership to address the issue of customer resource services;

(5) officers negotiate with all interested parties as necessary to resolve issues such as the electricity sub-station, toilets etc; and

(6) officers advertise the proposed disposal of the public open space needed for the extension in accordance with S123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and consider any representations made.

Reason for making decisions:

Investment in the library site is urgently required and this scheme not only manages to secure that investment but also allows further development to provide in a town centre environment a Family History / Discovery Centre that will not only service the residents of the Harrogate District but also the whole of the North Yorkshire sub-region.

It will enable the Council to meet a planning objective HD11I by encouraging development of a site that has been identified in need of improvement.

It will also help to resolve several community safety problems, greatly improve the toilet facilities and encourage people to use the gardens more.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Not to agree to the recommendations. This was rejected as it would mean that the reasons identified for making the decision would not be realised, which was considered to be a negative aspect when considering the benefits of the scheme as a whole.

(6.03 – 6.07 pm)

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