



DECISION RECORD ¹

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council's Call-In Procedure (Annex 9 of the Council's Constitution <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/freedom-of-information-and-council-data/open-data-statistics-about-hertfordshire/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/who-we-are-and-what-we-do.aspx>)

Subject: ACQUISITION OF NEW PREMISES FOR ENLARGED HATFIELD LIBRARY

Staff Contact: Roger Arbon

Executive Member: Ralph Sangster

Tel: 01992 588052

Portfolio: Resources & Performance

1. Decision

Acquisition of shop premises within Hatfield Town Centre to allow relocation of the existing Hatfield Library.

2. Reasons for the decision

This acquisition enables enlargement of the Hatfield Library to a level appropriate for a Tier 1 library, and supports the delivery of the Libraries Service's *Inspiring Libraries* strategy.

Occupying 26-32 White Lion Square will provide opportunities for the library service to develop the public library offer for the Hatfield community in line with the tiering specification. Specifically, we would be able to develop and provide:

- A CreatorSpace – the service has an aspiration to provide a CreatorSpace in every Tier 1 library. CreatorSpaces are a Hertfordshire concept which provide access to new technology such as Apple Mac's, 3D printing, virtual reality, green screen technology, sewing machine etc. They are flexible spaces where members of the community come into the library to learn, experiment and 'create' whatever they want to, building their skills and confidence in new technologies in a safe and supportive environment
- A community meeting space – a space that can be booked by community groups or organisations or used by the library for activities to root the library at the heart of the community. Activities and events will offer local access to cultural experiences, and allow people to meet to discuss shared interests, supporting the agenda to tackle social isolation.
- Additional stock – the average amount of stock available in libraries of a similar size to Hatfield is 30,708 items. Hatfield has a total stock of 26,457 items. This significantly reduces the choice available to the community. In particular, the children's stock average for libraries of a similar size is 11,045 items – Hatfield has 8,962.

Enhancing the amount of children's stock and in turn, the size of the children's library would support the library in delivering activities for children and their parents and carers e.g. Baby Rhyme Times, Toddler Tales etc.

The decision has an additional benefit of making the old library building available for Public Health to utilise for the relocation of a sexual health clinic to a more suitable location. The

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clinic is currently situated in St Albans Hospital, but has been given notice by the current landlord. A prolonged site search has not yielded a suitable replacement location.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) own the shop unit in White Lion Square and are keen to see the library re-located as they feel this will enhance the footfall which will assist with their regeneration of this part of the town centre shopping precinct. Terms have therefore been agreed with WHBC for the acquisition of the shop premises on a long lease at a peppercorn rent on payment of a premium. Grant of the lease is subject to obtaining planning consent for the necessary change of use.

3. Alternative options considered and rejected ²

Other locations have been considered, but none match the potential to support development and regeneration of the local area as well as the proposed location.

4. Consultation

(a) Comments of Executive Member ^{3 4}
Consulted at briefing – approval received.

(b) Comments of other consultees ⁵ None

5. Following consultation with, and the concurrence of the Executive Member, I am proceeding with the proposed decision.

Signed:

Title: Date:

6. Copies of agreed document to:

- All consultees
- Chairman, and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Hard & electronic copy (for public inspection both at County Hall and on www.hertfordshire.gov.uk) Democratic Services - Room 213 County Hall.

¹ for guidance see Chief Legal Officer's note "Taking Decisions"

² details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer at the time the decision was made

³ record any conflict of interest declared by any Executive Member consulted. If an Executive Member declares a conflict of interest DO NOT PROCEED without seeking advice from the Chief Legal Officer

⁴ If the matter has general significance for the Council and/or is, or is likely to be, controversial, then the officer shall consult the appropriate Executive Member before proceeding. In some cases it will be necessary to consult more than one Executive Member, and in some cases the Leader of the Council will need to be consulted

⁵ If the matter has local significance, but no general significance for the Council and no controversial aspects, the officer shall consult or inform the local member in writing (or by e mail) and proceed. It is essential that all officers responsible for delivering services ensure that local members are kept well briefed on issues affecting their areas.