



Democratic Services

Location: Phase II
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**To: COUNCILLOR MARTIN GODDARD
CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE**

**COUNCILLOR EDDIE LAVERY
CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES**

c.c. All Members of the Residents' Services Select
Committee
c.c. Carlos Montecino, Place Directorate

Date: 28 March 2024

Non-Key Decision request

Form D

CAPITAL RELEASE REPORT (March 2023)

DEPARTMENT: Resident Services

SERVICE AREA / PROGRAMME: Libraries Room Booking Website Creation Project

Dear Cabinet Members,

Attached is a report requesting that a decision be made by you as an individual Cabinet Member. Democratic Services confirm that this is not a key decision, as such, the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 notice period does not apply.

You should take a decision **on or after Tuesday 9 April 2024** in order to meet Constitutional requirements about publication of decisions that are to be made. You may wish to discuss the report with the Corporate Director before it is made. Please indicate your decision on the duplicate memo supplied, and return it to me when you have made your decision. I will then arrange for the formal notice of decision to be published.

Anisha Teji
Democratic Services

Title of Report: Libraries Room Booking Website Creation Project

Decision made:

Reasons for your decision: (e.g. as stated in report)

Alternatives considered and rejected: (e.g. as stated in report)

Signed Date.....

Cabinet Member for Finance/ Cabinet Member for Residents' Services

CAPITAL RELEASE REPORT (March 2023)

DEPARTMENT: Resident Services

SERVICE AREA / PROGRAMME: Libraries Room Booking Website Creation Project

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Cabinet Members | Councillor Martin Goddard Councillor Eddie Lavery |
| Cabinet Portfolios | Cabinet Member for Finance Cabinet Member for Resident's Services |
| Officer Contact | Carlos Montecino – Place Directorate |
| Papers with report | Appendix A with capital release requests for approval |

HEADLINES

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Summary | To seek Cabinet Member approval for the release of capital funds for the creation of a bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries. |
| Putting our Residents First | <p>This report supports our ambition for residents/ the Council of: An efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents.</p> <p>This report supports our commitments to residents of: A Digital-Enabled, Modern, Well-Run Council.</p> |
| Financial Cost | <p>This report seeks the release of £10,200 awarded from Round 2 LibraryOn grant programme for the creation of a bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries.</p> <p>The works will commence upon release of the funds and are due for completion by mid-April 2024.</p> |
| Relevant Select Committee | Residents' Services Select Committee |
| Wards affected | Not applicable |

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services agree to the capital release request of £10,200 fully funded by Arts Council England LibraryOn Grant Programme for the creation of a bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries (Appendix A).

Reasons for recommendation

The funds to be used in the implementation of this project will come exclusively from the funding awarded from the LibraryOn grant programme.

The creation of a bespoke online platform to promote bookable spaces in libraries will extend digital presence and engagement with existing and prospective customers. This in turn is expected to result in an increase in booking enquiries and income, a reduction in transactional work for staff managing the booking process and an improved experience for customers.

Alternative options considered

The library service had considered finding budget within its own existing resources to implement an online room booking system but identified the opportunity to undertake this project using grant funding.

The alternative would be to not proceed with the project at this time, return the grant funds and maintain the existing in-house process for the management of library bookable spaces or consider the implementation of a similar system at later with either service's funds or from grant funding if available. This would delay an improvement in enhancing digital access to services and the customer experience.

Select Committee comments

None at this stage.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The LibraryOn grant programme is supported through capital funding from Arts Council England. This second round of the grants programme had up to £500,000 available for capital projects that could be delivered swiftly and focus on a specific area of delivery.
2. The programme aims to improve the online presence of libraries and their digital capabilities as well as enhancing online discoverability by making it easier for existing or new customers to find, access, and engage with libraries. These align to the Council's strategy and the library service strategy ambitions to be a digital-enabled council and use and explore digital solutions that enhance the customer experience.
3. We have identified BookingPlus as the online booking solution and will engage with Kajima Community as the partner to work with on this project due to their track record in providing room booking systems for library environments.
4. The project needs to be delivered within the agreed timeframe (by mid April 2024). Applicants unable to do so may be at risk of having to return any unused or unallocated funds. We have drawn up a plan with the identified partner with the expectation that work could start by mid-March 2024 that would give us time to complete the project. Some preliminary work has already taken place as we had considered finding budget within existing library resources.

5. Councillor Eddie Lavery (Cabinet Member for Residents' Services) signed the Grant Funding Agreement on 20 November 2023.

Cost Details

The full contract cost details are in table 1 below:

Table 1: Contract Value

| Description | Year 1 (£) | Year 2 (£) | Year 3 (£) | Total (£) |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Website & venue set up | 7200 | | | 7,200 |
| Software licence fees | 2100 | 2100 | 2100 | 6,300 |
| Payment processing fee | 900 | 900 | 900 | 2,700 |
| Total | £10,200 | £3,000 | £3,000 | £16,200 |

Additionally, there will be revenue costs for card payment fees, which will be 1.4% plus £0.20 is applied per card transaction by Stripe, a payment gateway service provider and it is applied to all payments made by credit or debit card. We expect these charges to be approximately £350 per annum.

The contract will initially be for 3 years (1+1+1) and can be terminated at the end of each year at our discretion upon 30 days' notice. An annual review will be conducted prior to the renewal of the contract each year.

Year 1 costs are capitalised and will be fully financed from the grant received from the Arts Council England LibraryOn Grant Programme for the creation of a bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries scheme.

The capital cost plan is detailed in table 2 below:

Table 2: Capital Cost Plan

| Description | Amount (£) |
|---|----------------|
| Implementation & set up costs | 7,200 |
| License & card processing fees – Year 1 | 3,000 |
| Total | £10,200 |

The costs for the external professional services used to directly create asset is made up of two elements:

1. Website and venue set up. This is the creation of the booking website and is charged per library based on size. There are nine small-medium libraries (9 x £400) resulting in a total of £3,600.
2. Asset creation. This is the creation of new assets to showcase our libraries, including virtual tours, photography and floorplans. There are nine medium libraries (9 x £400) resulting in a total of £3,600.

In addition to the above, the project cost plan includes the initial 12-month period estimated charges for the software licence of the booking website (£2,100) and the licence for the payment processing element of the website (£900) based on an annual room hire income of £30K.

Subsequent years licence costs and card payment fees will be covered by revenue from room hire income. There aren't fixed license costs and are calculated as a % of the booking income:

- Platform license fee = 7% of bookings income
- Financial management service = 3% of bookings income

This means that there would not be license costs for the platform if no income from room hire is generated.

Financial Implications

(Libraries Room Booking Website Budget £10k, Previously Released Nil, Capital Release Requested £10k) – Appendix A

In December 2023, Cabinet accepted a £10k grant funding from the Arts Council England LibraryOn Grant Programme for the creation of a bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries scheme.

The report seeks the release of £10k for the libraries room booking website creation, which includes implementation, set up and licence fees, fully financed from grant. The release request is based on quotations and does not include any fees or contingency.

The project will be reported as part of the Corporate Technology and Innovation Programme once capital release is approved.

The annual software or subscription costs amount to £3,000, with £2,100 allocated for the booking website's software licence and £900 for the payment processing element. This calculation is based on an annual forecasted income of £30,000 from room/hall hire at libraries.

Additionally, there will be card payment fees, which will be 1.4% plus £0.20 is applied per card transaction by Stripe, a payment gateway service provider and it is applied to all payments made by credit or debit card.

The first year licence fee is capitalised as part of the implementation costs, and the subsequent year 2 & 3 licence costs and card payment fee will be covered by revenue room hire income.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon residents, service users and communities

By implementing the online booking platform, we will increase digital presence of, and engagement with, libraries. We would migrate existing customers to the platform, gain new customers and reach new audiences through the promotion and increased visibility and discoverability of digital methods to see, enquire about and hire spaces.

The ability to showcase bookable space online will assist prospective hirers by providing a one-stop-shop that provides images and text outlining the suitability of the space's available facilities and access. This saves customers time and simplifies the process. This also has the potential to introduce new customers to libraries, improving the experience and reputation of the library service.

Our current process does not allow customers to complete the discovery and securing of a room fully online; they are required to make contact with, or visit in-person, to ascertain the suitability of a space and to complete the booking. This presents a barrier to those who are unable to follow-up on these multiple steps – this includes people who may be unable to visit due to other demands on their time.

The online platform will provide virtual tours of each bookable space and library to create a Customer Journey, which will assist those with neurodiverse learning difficulties and additional needs.

For residents and customers who are unable to access the information digitally, they will still be able to engage with staff to enquire and book; in that case the online booking platform would be operated by staff and the benefit in terms of convenience, taking payments and managing the different stages in the process.

Consultation carried out or required

N/A.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Libraries

The library team would like to highlight that in line with the Grant Funding's terms, the project must be delivered before early May 2024 and the final report and other documents submitted on LibraryOn Grants' application portal by 10 May 2024.

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting the recommendation to release £10k for the libraries booking website creation project, which will be funded from Arts Council England LibraryOn Grant. This release request will have no impact on Council resource. On-going revenue implications will be covered from fees and charges income.

Legal

Legal Services confirm that the Council is responsible for this function pursuant to section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, which requires the Council to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' for all persons desiring to make use of it. Thus, there are no legal impediments to authorising the recommended capital release for the creation of a bespoke room booking website for bookable spaces in libraries, although any contract that is entered into, such as that with booking solution supplier BookingPlus, must comply with the Council's Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.

Capital Release Protocol

The release of all capital funds, and certain revenue funds, held by the Council is to be made by a formal democratic decision (Cabinet Member for Finance). No expenditure can be placed or committed by officers until this formal approval is given by Democratic Services. Release of funds must be for identified projects only and strictly not for the general release of funds for projects to be identified at a later date. No block releases of capital or funding will be allowed, except if authorised by the Leader of the Council in advance to Corporate Finance. The release of funds will only be made if previous Council, Cabinet or Cabinet Member agreement has been given to the project and only if there is an approved budget.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDIX A

Libraries Booking Website Creation Project

| Location | Project / Expenditure Title | Information | Funds Release Sought £000s | Approve | Hold | More Information Required |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---------|------|---------------------------------|
| Libraries | Booking website creation | Creation of bespoke libraries booking website | 10 | | | |
| Total seeking release | | | 10 | | | |
| Previously released | | | 0 | | | |
| Budget | | | 10 | | | |
| Remaining budget | | | 0 | | | |