

BRECKLAND/SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of Maxine O'Mahony, Director of Commissioning

To: CMT 22 August 2011, Overview & Scrutiny Commission (deadline 15 August 2011) 01 September 2011

(Author: Ralph Burton, Strategic Property Manager)

Subject: Bunker long term use & Deeds store

Purpose: To confirm the long term use of the bunker, Breckland business Centre (Dereham) and confirm the split of duties between Asset management and Legal/Democratic Services for the management of the Council's deeds.

Recommendation(s):

1. To authorise the long term use of the bunker at the Breckland Business Centre (Dereham) as long term corporate storage and its management and responsibility remains with Asset Management.
2. To confirm the split of duties between Asset Management (retrieval/return only) and Legal/Democratic Service's (overall responsibility and management) of the deeds and their storage.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The bunker is located at the Breckland Business Centre (Dereham) and is approximately 1,500 sq ft split into different rooms including a kitchen, shower/toilets, generator room and vent room.

1.1.2 In January 2011 the Emergency Planning Officer requested actions to be undertaken from the Council's Corporate Business Continuity Action Plan. One of those actions was to review how the Customer Contact Centre would be maintained in the event of an emergency. Asset Management was asked to provide a quote to undertake a feasibility to determine the full costs of bringing the bunker at the Breckland Business Centre (Dereham) back into use as a potential emergency use space.

1.1.3 Until that date the bunker was being used by three different service areas. Legal Services used it for the Council's deed store, Emergency Planning were using it for storage and as an emergency centre and Electoral Services were using part for storage of election equipment. None of those departments were recharged costs of the space they occupied and neither was the space being recharged to all departments (which would normally be the case for corporate storage).

1.1.4 At the time of being asked to undertake the feasibility the question was raised about recharges and the Deputy Chief Executive deemed that this should not occur until the long term future use of the bunker was determined.

1.1.5 The attached feasibility list was provided to the Council's measured term construction/facilities contractor for a cost to bring the bunker back into occupational use. The cost to undertake the full feasibility study was quoted at

£4,500.00. The Emergency Planning Officer declined to take up these works and pursued alternative suppliers.

1.1.6 At the Business Improvement & Projects Sub-Committee (BISC) on 07 June 2011 the chairman requested that Overview & Scrutiny Commission review the use of the bunker for a more in depth discussion of what the Council's requirements were for business continuity in terms of emergency space.

1.1.7 Following this Asset Management provided input for the Interim Business Development Manager for the BISC meeting on 05 July 2011. The advice given follows.

1.2 Issues

1.2.1 Advice from Asset Management

This advice was provided on the basis of whether the bunker could be used commercially. The Council has never previously let the bunker space to an external organisation. It has previously been used (and still is) as a deed store for the Council, as storage for elections for the Council and as storage for business continuity supplies. We do not believe it holds any significant commercial permanent letting potential that would warrant spending the costs on it to bring it up to occupation standard for the income it would generate. Plus other lettable accommodation exists in the town that is of a better quality. Also previous members of the emergency planning team used to be located in the bunker but ended up going on long term sick, partly due to the isolation and health and safety of the space. However without spending money on undertaking the feasibility (£4,500) or undertaking a marketing exercise this cannot be categorically ruled out, although our opinion is that it does not hold occupational commercial potential and would not be worth spending feasibility sums on.

1.2.2 The Council would be better placed to consider using the bunker space for its own use to relieve another space that would have better commercial viability i.e. an industrial unit, for uses such as long term secured storage that only require infrequent visits. Any alternative use would need a business case to prove its viability and funding to undertake a feasibility study.

1.2.3 Future Use

Since the last district election the bunker's use as storage for election equipment has been deemed unacceptable due to health and safety reasons due to the access to the space. Consequently it is now only used for Emergency Planning storage and the Deed Store storage.

1.2.4 Based on the advice in this report Asset Management recommends that the bunker's primary use should be for long term storage which does not require regular access, or storage of smaller easy to handle items such as Deeds. The space should be incorporated into the Council's existing corporate storage and recharged across all departments. This will enable the existing storage to be rationalised and potentially release an industrial unit which can be used for a commercial letting to help increase the revenue income for the Council. This is provided as a recommendation as this would be a long term decision that would not be cost efficient to change in the short term.

1.2.4 Deed Store

The deed store needs to remain at the bunker due to the statutory requirement to house these documents in a space that has up to 4 hours of fire resistance to give the optimum protection.

1.2.5 Democratic Services was, under the direction of the Head of Legal Services undertaking the management and retrieval of deeds. To help create efficiency Asset Management offered to undertake the retrieval of the deeds as the Caretakers visit the Business Centre daily. This offer was made on the basis that Democratic Services (as appointed by the Head of Legal Services (or equivalent) post) continue to have overall responsibility for the deed store including managing it, making up new files, logging deeds in/out, deed numbers, location of lost deeds and distributing of deeds to staff. In effect Asset Management will only undertake the collection and return of deed packets to/from the deeds store and Democratic Services continue to undertake all other aspects of the responsibility and management of the deeds and their storage. The custodian of the deeds in the constitution is the Head of Legal Services post (4C C1 8 1 &2).

1.2.6 A procedure has been drafted (see Appendix 3).

1.3 Reasons for recommendations

1.3.1 To provide clarity on the long term use for the bunker and split of responsibilities regarding the management of the deed store.

2. IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Risk

2.1.1 I have completed the Risk Management questionnaire and can confirm that risk has been given careful consideration.

2.2 Financial

2.2.1 The financial implications are outlined in the report regarding the additional payments for call-out fees which will need to be met from the salary budget.

2.3 Legal

2.3.1 No implications to the best of our knowledge.

2.4 Equality and Diversity

2.4.1 No implications to the best of our knowledge.

3. Alignment to Council Priorities

- Your Council, Your Services
- Entrepreneurial Council

4. Wards/Communities Affected

4.1 All Wards

Background papers (attached):-

None

Lead Contact Officer

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Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 – Feasibility Assessment List

Appendix 2 – Minutes extract from Business Improvement & Projects Sub-Committee

Appendix 3 – Deeds packet collection/retrieval procedure

Appendix 1

For: Teresa Cannon
From: Asset Management Service
Date: 13 January 2011
Re: Feasibility of the Bunker at the Breckland Business Centre, St Withburga Lane, Dereham as a potential Work Area Recovery for Corporate Business Continuity Action Plan

Current Occupiers

1. Legal Services - Deed store
2. Electoral Services - Electoral Services storage
3. Emergency Planning

Feasibility Assessment

The Bunker space is currently not fit for use as a work area. To check if the space may be adequate for use the following areas would need to be included in a feasibility assessment. To undertake this quotes could be obtained from relevant contractors (preferably one overall) to undertake the feasibility assessment culminating in a costed report to bring the Bunker space up to a standard for work use.

Key Questions

1. How many people could it accommodate as a working environment?
2. How many people does it need to accommodate as a working environment?
3. How long can people work in that environment?

Feasibility Areas for Inclusion

Mechanical & Electrical

1. Power –
 - a. Electricity - what is the availability, has an electrical circuit test been completed, where is it being metered, ongoing testing. Consider secondary metering if space is split.
 - b. PAT testing, ongoing testing.
 - c. Generator – check the exhaust for adequacy and functionality then move on to servicing check and regular servicing of the generator.
 - d. Fuel tank – condition of check, type of fuel, is there any, is it ok to use?
2. Air handling – what type, what is the capacity/volume of fresh air delivered per litres per second, how is it controlled, what is the minimum number this volume will accommodate for users in the space? Quality of air, duct/filters cleansing.
3. Heating – what type, how many heaters/locations, does it work, what regular testing is required?
4. Lighting – description of, how many, do they work, assess current lighting levels at desk levels and seek advice as to adequacy, are they tested?

Facilities & Health & Safety

5. Drainage – check the working of the drains rising main duplicate pumps etc, plan of location.
6. Toilets – description of, how many, do they work, regular testing?
7. Fresh water – where access located, does it work, legionnaires testing and remedial changes and then regular testing schedule.
8. Fire Safety – Fire Risk Assessment, installation of smoke/heat detectors and sounders, evacuation plan, emergency lights, fire extinguisher equipment date, emergency hatch check. Remedial changes and then regularity of assessment.
9. Kitchen facilities – description of, appliances available and working and then regular testing required.
10. Accessibility – not DDA, should it be, does it need to be, cost to convert?
11. Fixtures, fittings and furniture – currently available, condition of, currently 25 years old, ergonomic adequacy?

ICT

12. IT – description of current connections & equipment available/on-site – what needs to be available
13. Broadband – is it available, is it connected, current billing details – what needs to be available.
14. Telephone – description of current lines and hardware available/on-site, current billing details – what needs to be available?

Miscellaneous

15. Decoration – condition appears satisfactory only known once emptied.
16. One-off deep clean required and then regular cleaning and waste removal cost?
17. Ongoing repairs and maintenance cost, budget?
18. Continuous general regular servicing/checks/tests cost, budget, responsibility?
19. Who has occupational management responsibility for the space and budget?
20. Procedures for use of the space.
21. Keys – holders, who should be holders?
22. Who has access, should have access?
23. Costs to relocate Deed store, Electoral Services storage needs to be investigated.

Appendix 2

05 July BISC Minutes Extract

57/11 The Bunker

The Interim Business Development Manager gave an update using information provided by the Strategic Property Manager.

It had been suggested that the cost of refurbishing the bunker could be off-set by using it as a commercial let. However, the Strategic Property Manager did not think that would be financially viable. Instead it was suggested that the bunker could be used for secure storage, releasing other industrial units (currently used for storage purposes) to be let commercially.

The ICT Consultant said that from a Disaster Recovery perspective the bunker did not have sufficient capacity. There was already a Disaster Recovery site at Breckland House in Thetford which had better connectivity.

The Chairman did not want to spend money on the bunker if it was no longer part of a modern solution. He sought assurance that Disaster Recovery and Civil Contingency requirements were met. The Interim Business Development Manager could not confirm that but said there was an opportunity to provide a range of options which provided flexibility. For example, the Council had a part share in the One Stop Bus which was Broadband enabled and could be used as a response centre in the event of an emergency.

07 June 2011 BISC Minutes Extract

48/11 Emergency Generator (Inc. The Bunker)

It was further explained that a Health & Safety Assessment of the bunker (including water hygiene management) had been undertaken by Norfolk County Council with a list of recommendations (e.g. fire risk assessment, PAT testing) if it was to be considered as a Work Recovery Area for business continuity purposes. The bunker, although currently limited, had a back up generator, telephones, wireless router and broadband connectivity. The facility could accommodate up to 25 people depending on the layout, and could Business Improvement and Projects Sub-Committee support an Incident Management Team and critical services staff in the event of an incident affecting Elizabeth House. Business rates of £3k and the costs of regular generator maintenance were currently paid for from within the Emergency Planning budget.

The Emergency Planning Officer asked for guidance on the way forward as she felt that the bunker, if all tests were carried out, could be used for business continuity. In response to a question, Members were informed that business continuity was on the Risk Register as a medium risk at present. It was explained that under the Civil Contingencies Act the Council had a statutory duty to have business continuity management in place to ensure continuity of critical services in the event of a worse case scenario.

A Member felt that a further quote for a generator was required as he thought the quote from Kings & Barnham was too expensive. He also felt that monies should not be wasted on the bunker when the Council already had a perfectly good building in Elizabeth House. In response to a question about how much workspace was available at Breckland House in Thetford, Members were informed that four floors were probably used.

The Chairman advised that the cost of bringing the bunker up to a working standard would have to be one of the main factors to consider and urged the Council not to be complacent as accidents could happen. He felt that the Emergency Planning Officer and the Asset Management Team should work together on this and the rates should be reviewed. It was not good practice to pay £3k per annum to stand empty.

After further discussion, it was suggested that the bunker should be passed over to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission for a more indepth discussion of what the Council's requirements were for business continuity. Asset Management would have to be involved as part of the deliberations. The Emergency Planning Officer advised that the bunker, if refurbished, could be marketed for other opportunities such as a training facility. It was agreed that this matter should be brought back to the next meeting.

Deed Store Retrieval/Return Procedure

Date 12 August 2011

This procedure outlines the retrieval and return of deed packets to/from the Deed Store only. The management of the deeds and their storage remains under the responsibility of Democratic Services as delegated by the Head of Legal Services post or equivalent.

Definitions

“Appointed representative from Democratic Services” as appointed by the Head of Legal Services post or equivalent.

“Appointed representative from Asset Management” as appointed by the Head of Asset Management post or equivalent.

“Deed Packet Request Form” provided by appointed representative from Democratic Services.

Requesting Deeds

1. Member of staff completes yellow Deed Packet Request Form. Appointed representative from Democratic Services to provide assistance with identification of deed numbers.
2. Completed Deed Packet Request Form is provided to the appointed representative of Democratic Services to:
 - Log/register on an appropriate register that the request has been made
 - Check the deed is on the appropriate register and the deed is logged as being in the Deed Store,
 - Initial and write the cabinet location on the Deed Packet Request Form.
3. If the deed is not in the Deed Store the appointed representative of Democratic Services will inform the member of staff that requested it as to its location. If the Deed packet is in the Deed Store the completed Deed Packet Request Form is put in a designated tray in Legal/Democratic Services office area titled ‘Deed Store’.
4. Appointed representative of Asset Management to collect fully completed Deed Packet Request Form(s) from the ‘Deed Store’ tray and attends the Deed Store for retrieval.
5. At the Deed Store, locate the Deed packet, remove the orange Form from the packet, write on the orange Form the name of the member of staff requesting the Deed packet (from the yellow Deed Packet Request Form). Leave the orange Form in the deed packet location in the filing cabinet and bring the deed packet and yellow Deed Packet Request Form to Elizabeth House.
6. Collected Deed packets are brought back to the ‘Deed Store’ tray where the appointed representative of Asset Management deposits the collected deed packets.

7. The appointed representative from Democratic Services checks the deed packet on the register and then delivers the deed packets to the requesting officer.

Returning Deeds

1. Deed packets are returned to the appointed representative of Democratic Services who will log/register on an appropriate register that the deed packet has been returned.
2. The Deed packet is then put the designated tray in Democratic Services office area titled 'Deed Store'.
3. Appointed representative of Asset Management to collect deed packets from the 'Deed Store' tray and attends the Deed Store for returning the Deeds.
4. At the Deed Store, find the orange Form where the deed was removed from, cross the last name off the orange Form and put the orange Form back in the deed packet and return the deed packet to the same location.