

Hungate Review – Interim Report

Background

1. On 8 July 2008 following consultation with Group Leaders, the Chief Executive withdrew the planning application for the proposed development of the Council's new office accommodation at Hungate. This followed receipt of a formal written response from English Heritage that although the proposed building was a very impressive, sustainable and fit for purpose civic building, they were concerned that the building, by virtue of its height and massing could not be developed without harming the setting of the cluster of historic buildings and spaces around it. In summary, they objected to the proposal.
2. Members of the public commented on this decision and previous decisions taken in regard to the Hungate development and as a result of the concerns expressed, Cllr Brooks submitted this topic for scrutiny review in order to fully understand those decisions and the costs involved to date.
3. A feasibility report was presented to Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) on 15 September 2008, and having agreed to proceed with the review, an Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee was formed and the following remit was agreed:
4. **Aim**
To clarify whether the correct strategy for the accommodation project was set and adhered to, in order to ensure any future council projects are delivered on time and on budget.

Objectives

- i. In light of the overall budget, to identify whether the initial budget set was correct i.e. that all the relevant factors had been identified and included for, including the volume of all fees both agreed and incurred
- ii. To understand the decision taken in respect of agreeing which part of CYC would act as internal 'client' and to understand the relationship between Planning and the client.
- iii. To identify whether the consultation process was conducted properly and whether due consideration was given to the responses received when deciding how to proceed
- iv. To identify whether best practice was followed throughout the process in seeking the views of statutory consultees and English Heritage

specifically, and whether those views unduly influenced the decisions made

- v. To identify whether time was a factor in reaching the decisions made throughout the process e.g. in agreeing the design
5. On 10 November 2008 the Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee met for the first time and agreed a timetable of meetings and a methodology for carrying out this review.

Consultation

6. The Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee held an informal information gathering event on 26 November 2008 and the following internal and external consultees attended:

Assistant Director of Property Services & Accommodation Project Director CYC - Project Management Team

Maddy Jago Regional Director of English Heritage

Assistant Director of Planning & Design CYC – Planning & Conservation

Head of Risk Management & Accommodation Project Manager CYC – Risk Management

7. Prior to the formal meeting held on 12 January 2009, a further informal information gathering session was held and the following internal consultees attended:

Chief Executive
Director of City Strategy
Director of Resources
Technical Finance Manager

Information Gathered

8. The information gathered at the two informal sessions and at the public meetings held, is shown at Annex A together with an analysis of that information.
9. At the meeting held on 27 January 2009, Members requested further clarification on the financial position in regard to the actual expenditure, and committed and abortive costs, including information on the additional 2 year rental costs to be incurred for St Leonards and the additional interest likely to be earned on the money from the sale. The Technical Finance Manager present at the meeting, agreed to provide this information. Unfortunately this has not been provided in time to be published with this report, but it will be made available for circulation to Members and for publication on line, prior to this meeting (Annex B to follow).

10. Members also requested a copy of the Atkins report containing the brief for the Hungate site. Due to the size of this document, it is not possible to attach this as an annex to the written report but it is available for viewing on line. A hard copy of the Annex (Annex C) can be viewed at council offices by contacting the Scrutiny Officer – see contact details below.
11. Members also agreed to invite the Regional Director of English Heritage to attend this meeting and agreed to make a 'Freedom of Information' request to CABE for copies of all their correspondence sent between April and July 2008 to English Heritage, the Council and others, in relation to the Hungate project. Both the invitation and FOI request were sent via email on 28 January 2008. A written response has subsequently been received from English Heritage declining our request to attend this meeting, and a letter received from CABE detailing the documentation they will be providing as a result of our FOI request is shown at Annex D. Their actual documentation is being provided hard copy and has not yet been received, therefore it has not been possible to include it as an annex to this report. As soon as it is received, copies will be circulated to Members and, depending on the size of the documentation pack, will either be published on line or made available to view at Council offices.

Options

10. Having considered the information contained within this report and its annexes, Members may choose to carry out further consultation by calling on additional witnesses or agree that no further information is required.

Implications

11. **Human Resources** – If having considered all of the information provided to date, members decide that further clarification is required, it will be necessary to hold further interim meetings requiring the involvement of members of the project team. This in turn will reduce the time they can spend on their ongoing work on the development.
12. **Financial** – Originally there were only limited financial implications associated with this review, based on officer time spent supporting the minimal number of meeting scheduled. It is recognised however, that the financial implications will increase as further meetings are arranged.
13. There are no equalities, legal or other implications associated with the recommendation within this report.

Corporate Strategy

14. The provision of the new accommodation and the consequential improvements in services to our customers will contribute to all of the Council's priorities and key change programmes.

Risk Management

15. SMC agreed with the view of Cllr Brooks that this review should be conducted quickly and in a minimum number of meetings, in order not to adversely affect or delay the ongoing work of the Project Team and to enable the findings and resulting recommendations to benefit their processes.

Recommendations

16. Having considered the aim and objectives for this review, and In light of the above options, Members are asked to:
- Identify if any further information is required, and if not;
 - Agree that all the relevant information has now been considered, and;
 - Identify any recommendations they would like to make as a result of the review

Reason: In order to ensure any future council projects are delivered on time and on budget

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Feasibility Report dated 15 September 2008
Scoping Report & Information Pack dated 18 November 2008
Interim Reports dated 10 December 2008, 12 & 27 January 2009

Annexes:

- Annex A** – Record and analysis of information gathered at the two informal information gathering sessions
- Annex B** – Further financial information, as requested at the meeting on 27 January 2009 (to follow)
- Annex C** – Strategic Site Study report produced by Atkins - a hard copy of Annex C can be viewed at council offices, by contacting the Scrutiny Officer – see contact details above.
- Annex D** – Letter from CABA detailing their response to the FOI request (Documentation pack to follow)