

Agenda item:

[No.]

Cabinet

On 16th June 2009

Report Title : **New Coroners Court - Conversion and refurbishment**

Report of **Niall Bolger Director of Urban Environment**

Signed :

Contact Officer : **Keith Betts, Commercial Service Manager, Enforcement**

Telephone 020 8489 5525

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Non-Key Decision**

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To inform Cabinet of the proposals to relocate the Coroner to new accommodation and to approve these works for admission to the Council's Capital Programme.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member

- 2.1 The new Coroner's accommodation supports both the regeneration of the heartlands programme and an improved service for the residents of the Coronial jurisdiction. The new Court is more centrally located and with it's improved facilities, will ably support those who lives have been touched and saddened by a sudden or unexpected death.

3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:

3.1. Priority 5 – Delivering excellent , customer focused , cost effective services.

The new Coroner's Court and Offices provide a facility centrally located within the jurisdiction it serves . It will provide more space for the bereaved and next of kin to liaise with court officials and legal representatives, and is fully adapted for users with disabilities. Families, relatives and friends experiencing the unexpected death of a loved one will be able to visit premises that provide comfort and support to them , in pleasant and respectful surroundings.

3.2. Regeneration Strategy.

The new premises will enable the closure of the existing Coroner's Court adjacent to the Hornsey Central Depot site and enable the unaffected redevelopment of the depot site as part of the Heartlands regeneration programme. The existing Coroner's Court building is also the site of the old mortuary which has now relocated to our new mortuary in Church Lane, Tottenham . Part funding of the new mortuary (£1.5 million) was achieved from the Growth Area Fund Round 2 through the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG). This was on the basis of heartlands regeneration and the associated housing delivery in line with Government Policy. CLG would be concerned if the old mortuary / Coroners building was not redeveloped as part of the larger Hornsey Central Depot development as this would be contrary to the new mortuary funding agreement.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. That Cabinet approve these works for admission to the capital programme and note the proposals to relocate the Coroner.

5. Reason for recommendation(s)

- 5.1. As part of the redevelopment of the Hornsey Depot site, the current building in Myddelton Road , N 8 , containing the old mortuary and the Coroners Court and offices is to be demolished. It has been necessary to both build a new mortuary and to relocate the Coroner to new accommodation. This report relates to the relocation of the Coroner and the police Coronial staff.
- 5.2. The Enforcement part of Frontline Services has the responsibility on behalf of the Council for the local authority support to the Coronial function, as determined in statute. This includes not only the appointment of the Coroner, but also to all

financial aspects and matters relating to the provision of accommodation and court facilities.

- 5.3. Suitable new accommodation for the Coroner has been located within Barnet. This listed building at 29, Wood Street (High Barnet) was the authority's former Registry & Registrar's office until its closure a few years ago. Following Director's approval, this was leased for an initial 10 years and some months later, the single storey annexe to the building was leased to provide a separate area for jury deliberations. The main building is in generally good order, but does need both external and internal repairs and the removal of a redundant cash receiving office that was situated on the ground floor. The annexe requires more significant refurbishment together with a new flat roof.
- 5.4. The original budget estimate for the building works was £120,000. This figure did not include provisional sums or contingencies. There were also subsequent pre-tender revisions to the mechanical and electrical works.
- 5.5. In order to manage, design and supervise works the Frankham Consultancy Group Ltd were appointed by Construction Procurement as consultants under the Council's Framework Agreement. A specification for the works was completed to include :
- Conversion of the first floor Wedding Room into the new Coroner's Court with suitable court furniture including witness and jury boxes.
 - Removal of the ground floor cash office and reinstatement as a general office.
 - Extensive renovations and improvement to the annexe to provide jury accommodation with dedicated washroom facilities.
 - External repairs including decoration, servicing and improvement to plumbing and electrical installations and general repairs.
 - Improvements to security including intruder and fire alarm, CCTV entry and security protection to the rear fire escape staircase.
- 5.6 A tendering process managed by Construction Procurement was undertaken, using the Framework Agreement. A report has been prepared by Frankham and Construction Procurement in respect of the contract award, and this matter will be considered by the Director of Urban Environment under his delegated powers.
- 5.7 Contract Procedure Rules state that no contract shall be let unless the expenditure involved has been fully considered and approved and sufficient money has been allocated in the relevant budget (6.06). This will be undertaken by the Director of Urban Environment under delegated powers.
- 5.8 However, the proposed Coroner's Court project is not currently in the capital programme. This is needed even though the project is not to be financed by the capital programme. Financial Regulations state that the addition of or amendment to any scheme in the capital programme above £100,000 requires the approval of the Cabinet (5.40).

5.9 The works are to be financed through prudential borrowing with repayment over the next five years . Based upon borrowing at 7.28% the cost for the whole jurisdiction is about £60k per year for the next five years as follows

- Brent is £12,396 (20.66%) per year
- Enfield is £12,870 (21.45%) per year
- Barnet is £14,796 (24.66%) per year
- Harrow is £9,756 (16.26%) per year.
- Haringey is £10,182 (16.97%) per year

5.10 The costs of this borrowing have been agreed with the jurisdiction authorities who have confirmed they are happy to proceed on this basis. Approvals for Barnet, Brent and Enfield were all received by 23 January 2009, however Harrow only confirmed their acceptance on 5 May 2009. The Harrow delay was not related to the proposal, but purely that there had been three changes in senior manager over the past six months.

6. Other options considered

6.1. In discussions with the jurisdiction authorities, the option to spread this expenditure over five years was considered to be the best option . The financial arrangements / agreement with the other authorities is that they contribute to the cost of the Coroner's Service in proportion to their populations as detailed by the percentages list in paragraph 5.9 above.

7. Summary

- 7.1. A new Coroner's Court and accommodation is required to release the present site in Hornsey for redevelopment. The building leased for this purpose in Barnet requires conversion and repair to provide the new facilities.
- 7.2 The works are currently not in the Council's capital programme and Cabinet approval is required to place works in the programme where the cost exceeds £100k.
- 7.3 Subsequently, the approval of the costs for the works and the award of contract can be considered by the Director of Urban Environment under delegated powers.

8. Chief Financial Officer Comments

8.1 The total cost of the proposed works to the new Coroners Court is estimated to be £275,000 including fees and, as this sum exceeds £100,000, Cabinet will need to

consider whether to approve an addition to the authority's 2009/10 capital programme.

8.2 Ordinarily, the cost of the works would be funded from revenue contributions from the five boroughs in the jurisdiction but the other boroughs would prefer to pay for the works over a number of years. It is now proposed that the works are initially financed through prudential borrowing with repayment by the contributing boroughs over the next five years. Written confirmation has been received from all other boroughs to this arrangement. This therefore meets the Council's policy on passing the affordability test where the cost of borrowing is being met by additional revenue income and/or expenditure savings.

8.3 The annual cost to Haringey over the next five years is approximately £10,200. This can be met from within existing Urban Environment budgets.

9. Head of Legal Services Comments

9.1. The costs of the Coroner's Service are statutorily the joint responsibility of the 5 Boroughs within the local Coroner's District based on percentage contributions agreed between the Boroughs or in default fixed by the Ministry of Justice.

9.2. As stated in paragraph 5.8 of the report, the addition of a scheme to the capital programme in excess of £100,000 requires the approval of the full Cabinet.

9.3. A separate report will be submitted to the Director of Urban Environment who has delegated powers to award the contract where the value is below £250,000.

10. Head of Procurement Comments – Not applicable in this instance

10.1 This report is seeking approval to include the cost of the relocation of the Coroners office, in the Haringey Council Capital Programme.

10.2 There are no procurement implications or decisions required in this report.

11. Equalities & Community Cohesion Comments

11.1 The new premises have been previously adapted by Barnet Council to full Disability Discrimination Act standards including adapted toilet provision, access ramp and lift .

11.2 The premises are to serve the population and needs of the whole jurisdiction, five authorities spread across a wide strip of North London. This new building is more centrally located with good transport links which will enable better access by all users.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the other four jurisdiction authorities over the past year and they are in agreement with our proposals as lead authority for the Coronial function. HM Coroner, Mr Andrew Walker , is fully supportive of the proposals and sees the new court and accommodation as an integral part of his proposals to provide a 'gold standard' Coronial service for the jurisdiction authorities.

13. Service Financial Comments

- 13.1 The total cost of the proposed works to the new Coroners Court is estimated to be £275,000 including fees. The annual cost for the jurisdiction is £60k of which Haringey's cost will be £10,182 per year.
- 13.2 There is a budget provision identified within the Coroner's budget of V32600 to be used for the yearly charge of £10,182.

14. Use of appendices /Tables and photographs

- 14.1. There are no appendices , tables or photographs attached to this report

15. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 15.1. Approval to lease accommodation
Works specification and tender documentation.