

# Report to Cabinet Member for Resources

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Decision to be taken on or after 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Decision can normally be implemented at least  
3 working days after decision has been signed.

Cabinet Member Report No. R09.19

**Title:** Amersham Library – Surrender of Ground Lease

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> October 2019

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**Local members affected:** Gareth Williams – Amersham & Chesham Bois

*For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444*

## Summary

The land upon which the Amersham Library is situated is held under the terms of a ground lease originally granted to the County Council by Amersham Rural District Council for a term of 200 years from 25<sup>th</sup> March 1960.

The proposal is for the Council to surrender land demised under this lease subject to the provision of alternative library accommodation to enable Chiltern District Council to construct the Chiltern Lifestyle Centre.

## Recommendation

### A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

Chiltern District Council and the Shadow Executive have approved the development plans to create the new Chiltern Lifestyle Centre incorporating a 50 place nursery, library, community hall and meeting rooms, a spa and leisure facility incorporating swimming, health and fitness and sports hall. The development site includes District Council land held on lease by the County Council upon which both the library and a separate Youth Centre building (which includes a Pre-School Nursery) are situated.

A lease granted to the County Council in 1960 (by the then Amersham Rural District Council) specifically allowed only for construction of the library. However a subsequent Deed & Lease was entered into in 1966 which permitted the County Council to construct the Youth Centre building in part on the 'library lease' land and also upon an additional area of land demised under the 1966 lease.

To enable the works to commence on the Lifestyle Centre, the library needs to be demolished under phase 1 and this is to be relocated into the District Council's King George V office building during October 2019. This will therefore necessitate the immediate surrender of part of the land demised under the 1960 library lease. Subsequent relocation of the library to the new library facility in the Lifestyle Centre is programmed to take place during 2021.

The phasing allows the Youth Club and Nursery to remain open until the Lifestyle Centre is complete, following which the Nursery should relocate into Lifestyle Centre.

It is recommended therefore that the County Council agrees to the lease surrender subject to this being simultaneous with the grant of a licence by Chiltern District Council permitting the library facility to be accommodated within the King George V office building and with all associated costs being met by Chiltern District Council

#### **B. Other options available, and their pros and cons**

Not to agree to the immediate surrender and await the transfer of the land to the new Unitary Buckinghamshire Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. However, this would frustrate Chiltern District Council's programme of works and could also have financial implications for the construction contract.

#### **C. Resource implications**

Chiltern District Council is to fund the costs of temporarily relocating the library into its own office building and also will meet the County Council's costs incurred in relation to the lease surrender.

#### **D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment**

The lease surrender would normally justify a capital receipt (by way of a surrender payment) for the County Council or provision of alternative facilities of similar value (or a combination of both). However, the creation of the new unitary Council will result in the respective Council's property assets being merged into the new Buckinghamshire Council's property portfolio and a surrender payment is not therefore considered to be appropriate.

#### **E. Legal implications**

The Council's legal representatives are instructed in this matter and will be approving the draft documentation prepared by Chiltern District Council in relation to the lease surrender and licence for the temporary library occupation

## **F. Property implications**

These are as detailed in the forgoing,

## **G. Unitary Council**

As has been mentioned in the forgoing, the creation of the new unitary Council will result in the respective Council's property assets being merged into the new Buckinghamshire Council's property portfolio

## **H. Other implications/issues**

Some sessions that have been taking place in the existing library (such as Bounce and Rhyme) will temporarily halt during the development but parents and carers will still be able to attend sessions at other libraries in the area.

## **I. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views**

The local County Council member is also the cabinet member for Community Engagement and Public Health and is aware and supportive of the proposals in relation to the library facility. See also under 'Background Papers' below

## **J. Communication issues**

The decision will be communicated through the Council's Decision Making process

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### **Background Papers**

Planning application reference PL/18/4593/RC.

Report and decision of Shadow Executive (meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019)

Details of public consultations in 2016 and 2017 and various public information events in 2018 and also links to other key documents are available at: <https://chilternlifestylecentre.com/>

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### ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

*If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)*