

COMMITTEE:	Cabinet
DATE:	10th April 2002
SUBJECT:	Former Old Town Library
REPORT OF:	Chief Executive
Ward(s):	Downside
Purpose:	To consider the future use of the former Old Town Branch Library
Contact:	Martin Ray, Chief Executive, Telephone 01323 415002 or internally on extension 5002.
Recommendations:	To authorise the Officers to research the potential community use of this building and report back on potential letting arrangements as soon as possible

1.0	<u>Introduction</u>
1.1	Cabinet will be familiar with the decision of the East Sussex County Council to close the Old Town Branch Library. That decision was put into effect on Thursday 28th March.
1.2	The property has been occupied by the County Council under minor user rights with the freehold being held by this Council. The County Council has now confirmed that they wish to give up their minor user rights and as a consequence the property will return to this Council as soon as it has been vacated. No precise date for this has been agreed but it is likely to be during the month of April. Agreement has to be reached on what items the County Council may remove for library purposes elsewhere.

2.0	<u>Council Use</u>
2.1	There are no specific operational uses for which this Council requires the building. However, there may be some activities that the Council might wish to locate in the area, but these are unlikely to require exclusive use of the building.
3.0	<u>Community Use</u>
3.1	There are frequent requests for buildings that can be used for community purposes. Members may recall suggestions to provide a facility for young people in the area. The Community Centre, which is close by is well used. It may not have available space to accommodate new requests.
3.2	If Cabinet were minded to make the building available for community use, it would assist if the criteria for such use were agreed.
3.3	<p>The main requirements should include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The building should be available for community use for the maximum time possible. b) Any group taking on the building should be able to show that it has the resources to operate the building for a number of years. This should include a significant number of volunteers and adequate funding c) The costs of operating the building and the activity proposed must be paid for by the group. While a nominal rent can be charged at the outset, the group should be able to fund a rent once it has been properly established.
4.0	<u>Consultation</u>

4.1	Contact has been made with the Old Town Community Association and some other voluntary groups in the area to seek their views on the future use of this building. However, this has only occurred at the time of writing this report and it would be unreasonable to expect a reply by now for Cabinet to consider. If any views are available these will be reported at the meeting.
4.2	There has been no contact with local residents on potential uses for the building.
5.0	<u>Friends of Old Town Library</u>
5.1	At this time, the Council has received an approach from the Friends of the Old Town Library. They would like to use the building for a book lending service, educational and other local community activities. At this stage no detailed discussions have taken place with the Friends to determine how their proposal can be brought into effect. They have indicated that they have adopted a constitution and are now embarking on fund-raising. However, major will need to be held up until the Friends know they have authority to take over the building. They have had some discussions with the County Council about acquiring surplus equipment and books.
6.0	<u>Financial Implications</u>
6.1	The County Council set aside approximately £4000 a year to meet the normal outgoings associated with the building. This would not have included a provision for major repair. The Council does not have a specific budget to meet these costs. Any letting should seek to pass the responsibility for these costs to the intended occupant.
7.0	<u>Human Resource Implications</u>
7.1	There are no human resource implications from this report and its recommendations only. However, it should be remembered that all of the Council's staff involved in supporting community activities are fully committed and there is no capacity to provide significant help to any new organisation.

8.0	<u>Summary</u>
7.1	There is certainly one request to use the building for community use and there may be others that need to be considered.
7.2	Any organisation that takes on the building must be able to demonstrate that it is viable and can make a long-term success of its proposed use.
Martin Ray Chief Executive	
Background Papers: The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows: Correspondence with County Council, Friends of Old Town Library and the Old Town Community Association To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.	
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