

COMMITTEE:	CABINET
DATE:	WEDNESDAY, 5th JUNE, 2002
SUBJECT:	FORMER OLD TOWN LIBRARY
REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Ward(s):	OLD TOWN
Purpose:	To consider the current position concerning the building and to determine the way forward.
Contact:	Martin H. Ray, Chief Executive, Telephone 415002 or Ext. 5002
Recommendations:	(a) Note progress
	(b) Determine whether the Friends may have a temporary occupation of the building for storage purposes for three months.
	(c) Indicate whether a permanent letting can be given to the Friends provided a sustainable business plan is produced.

1.0	<u>Background</u>	
1.1	Cabinet considered the former Old Town Library and its potential use at its meeting on 10th April 2002.	
1.2	Cabinet agreed the following criteria for its future use:-	

	(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.	
1.3	Cabinet authorised me to negotiate and agree potential occupation of the premises in consultation with the Leader of the Council, provided that any decisions are reported back to Cabinet.	
2.0		<u>Progress of discussions</u>
2.1		The County Council have indicated that the building will be handed over to this Council at the end of this month. All the existing fittings and fixtures remain in the premises. The building is in a reasonable condition considering its age and design. This Council take over the building in its existing condition.
2.2		Contact has been made with the Community Association in Old Town and the Youth Service of East Sussex County Council. There is a request for some facilities which could be available for supported youth activity. This Council is supporting the operation of a Youth Club at the Community Centre in Old Town. The County Council Youth Service deploy youth workers in the area on two evenings a week engaged in outreach and detached work. Further development of this work is dependent on having access to a building and further support from volunteers.

2.3	<p>The Friends of Old Town Library have now adopted a formal constitution. Their aims are to provide facilities for the local community to borrow and enjoy books and also to provide other forms of communicating stories, information and knowledge. The Friends will assist in providing community facilities as appropriate.</p>
2.4	<p>The Friends have maintained their request to take over the building to establish a book lending service. They have indicated that they have raised some money already. They believe that a full fund raising campaign should be started soon but would need to know that the building would be made available to them before fund raising can start in earnest. They do not believe they could properly open for business for a few months. However, they have asked if they could be given a temporary letting in order to store books and other equipment.</p>
2.5	<p>The Friends have negotiated the purchase of over 1000 books from the East Sussex Library service and clearly they need storage facilities for the books.</p>
2.6	<p>At this stage, discussions are taking place with the Friends regarding a fully worked up proposal as outlined in paragraph 1.2 above.</p>
3.0	<p><u>Alternative Uses</u></p>

3.1	<p>The Council will assume full ownership in the near future. As such, liability for rates and maintenance will transfer. There is no budget for this expenditure. The preferred action would be to establish a viable use for the building (obtaining any planning permission as necessary) and arrange a letting which would give the Council a return on its asset. This should be started now, but is on hold while the possible use for community purposes is being examined.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Financial Implications</u></p>
4.1	<p>The County Council set aside approximately £4,000 a year to meet the normal outgoings for the building. This Council can assume some of these when it takes over the building.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Short Term Letting</u></p>

5.1	<p>If the Friends are allowed to use the building on a short term basis pending development of a sustainable business plan, then they must be expected to accept responsibility for normal outgoings even if no rent is charged. The letting should be limited to three months.</p>
5.2	<p>The Friends should be encouraged to work with the Youth Development Worker and East Sussex Youth Service to see a way to make the facilities available for youth activities.</p>

6.0	<u>Conclusion</u>
6.1	Cabinet is asked to:-
	(a) Note progress
	(b) Determine whether the Friends may have a temporary occupation of the building for storage purposes for three months.
	(c) Indicate whether a permanent letting can be given to the Friends provided a sustainable business plan is produced.

--

Martin H. Ray

Chief Executive

Background Papers:

The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

All correspondence on Old Town Library file held by Chief Executive.

To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.

(mhr/ag/docs/reports/cabinet/june0502oldtownlib)