

 Executive Committee 9th January 2013		Agenda Item No. 8
Title	Spencer Yard – Former United Reform Church	
For further information about this report please contact	Bill Hunt, Deputy Chief Executive 01926 456014 Bill.hunt@warwickdc.gov.uk Ray Smith, Enterprise Development Manager 01926 456029 Ray.smith@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	n/a	
Background Papers	n/a	

Contrary to the policy framework:	Yes
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	12/12/12	Bill Hunt
Head of Service		Tracy Darke
CMT	12/12/12	Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	13/12/12	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	12/12/12	Andrew Jones
Finance	13/12/12	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	14/12/12	Cllr Hammon
Consultation & Community Engagement		

Views of local arts organisations have and are being obtained by the Council's Arts Development Officer on a one to one basis. The County Music Service will be arranging a wider meeting with all interested parties early in the New Year.

Final Decision?

No

Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)

A further report will be submitted to the Executive if the Council and the County Music Service are successful in their Stage 1 bid for capital grant funding from Arts Council England.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the work that has been undertaken to seek to bring the former United Reform Church (URC) in Spencer Street back into a use consistent with the Council's aspirations to develop the Spencer Yard area as a cultural quarter and seeks permission for a detailed feasibility study to determine the buildings suitability to become performance space and the main headquarters for the Warwickshire County Music Service.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Executive approves an exception to the Code of Procurement Practice under Para. 5.2.3 and that Robothams Architects are appointed to undertake a feasibility study and options analysis up to RIBA Stage B funded by Warwickshire County Music Service.
- 2.2 That Executive authorises the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) and the Procurement Manager to approve this work subject to receipt of a satisfactory and reasonable quotation from Robothams Architects.
- 2.3 That Executive approves the exploration, in partnership with the Warwickshire County Music Service (CMS), of the feasibility of applying to the Arts Council England (ACE) for capital funding, and delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (BH), in consultation with the Development Portfolio Holder to submit a Stage 1 funding bid, if appropriate, when the final tranche of the ACE Capital Grant Scheme is announced early in the New Year B funded by Warwickshire County Music Service.
- 2.4 That Executive delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) and Procurement Manager, in consultation with the Development Portfolio Holder, to seek competitive quotations, in accordance with the Council's Code of Procurement Practice, from specialist bid writing consultants to prepare and submit any subsequent Stage 1 bid to ACE.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Robothams Architects have extensive knowledge of the former United Reform Church (URC) as they were the appointed architects for the defunct AWM funded Loft Theatre scheme. Given their knowledge, the anticipated short

- window of opportunity to prepare an urgent funding bid and their ability to be able to undertake this work to fit this timetable we wish to use their services.
- 3.2 The Council will request a competitive quotation from Robothams Architects to undertake a Feasibility Study and Options Analysis. The Deputy Chief Executive and the Council's Procurement Manager will only accept this quotation if they are satisfied that it provides good value for money and compares favourably with other recent quotations for architectural services that have been secured through a competitive tendering process.
- 3.3 The Council's Arts Development Officer is in discussions with ACE and potential partners, and it is expected that the Council and CMS will be asked to submit a Stage 1 bid for funding from the ACE Capital Grants Scheme in February or March 2013. The Capital Grants Scheme adopts a two stage application process. If successful at Stage 1 then funding would be reserved by ACE pending the submission of the full Stage 2 application. However before an application can be submitted the project must be discussed with ACE who will then invite the applicant to make a Stage 1 application. If the Council has to go through a process of seeking other quotations for architectural services it is likely the Council will miss the Stage 1 'window' as there will be insufficient time for a new architect to get the building surveyed and plans drawn that will meet ACE requirements. Time is therefore now of the essence.
- 3.4 Should the Council and CMS be successful with the Stage 1 bid there will then be an 18 month period in which to prepare and submit the Stage 2 bid. A full report would be submitted to the Executive if the Stage 1 bid succeeds.
- 3.5 The cost of the feasibility study and options analysis is expected to be less than £20K and the Council's costs will be reimbursed in full by the County Music Service (CMS).
- 3.6 A specialist bid-writing consultant with experience of ACE and other arts funding streams will be procured in accordance with the Code of Procurement Practice to prepare the ACE Stage 1 bid. The cost is expected to be less than £10K and again the costs will be reimbursed in full by CMS.
- 3.7 CMS are seeking to bring all their staff together in a new HQ building which has the capability of providing offices, practice and rehearsal rooms as well as performance space for orchestral and other concerts. The concept is to deliver an Arts and Music Hub, sited within Warwick District but serving the whole County and providing facilities that can be shared with other arts organisations.
- 3.8 The intention is to accommodate all of CMS's requirements in the present URC building. However, there is a possibility that a rear extension will need to be added to ensure all their needs can be provided for, which will be considered through the feasibility study and options analysis. Such a requirement could substantially increase the cost of refurbishment and could result in a need to raise additional funding over and above what ACE may be prepared to fund.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

4.1 **Policy Framework**

There are no proposed policy changes

4.2 **Fit for the Future**

Bringing the URC back into long term use would be a great improvement to the Spencer Yard area and a major regeneration project that should stimulate more cultural activity and growth within and around that area. The intention is that CMS will lease the property and will be responsible for maintaining the building and all other property related costs. The scheme being investigated does not conflict with any of the other strategic property work currently being undertaken.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

5.1 An exception to the Code of Procurement Practice is sought for the reasons outlined above.

5.2 The cost of the Feasibility Study and Options analysis is expected to be less than £20k and will be covered in full by CMS.

5.3 The submission of the Stage 1 bid to the Arts Council does not commit the Council to any further revenue or capital cost other than to secure the services of a specialist consultant to write the bid. This will be funded by Warwickshire County Music Service Cost is expected to be less than £10K and normal procurement procedures will apply.

5.4 The Council has an earmarked reserve to fund "Project enabling costs" associated with the development of uses for the URC. This is a revenue budget which had an Unspent balance of £48,500 at the closure of the 2011-12 Accounts. To date £3,200 of this has been spent, leaving a balance of £45,300. As CMS have offered to reimburse WDC in full with the costs outlined in 5.2 and 5.3 this budget will not be needed on this occasion.

5.5 A Heads of Terms agreement is currently being drawn up to clarify project responsibilities of WDC and CMS including how any further project development costs are allocated. This agreement will be particularly important if the Stage 1 bid is successful and a full application needs to be worked up. This agreement will be included with the Executive Report that will be submitted at that time.

6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

6.1 Follow normal Code of Procurement Practice procurement procedures and seek quotations from at least three architectural practices. This is not considered appropriate in this particular case for the reasons outlined in 3.1 and 3.3 above.

7. **BACKGROUND**

7.1 The freehold of URC was acquired by the Council in 2009 with the assistance of grant funding of £750K from the Regional Development Agency Advantage West Midlands as part of the project to relocate the Loft Theatre and to re-develop the existing Loft Theatre site. This multi million pound project was cancelled by Advantage West Midlands in 2010 when the Government announced that they were closing all Regional Development Agencies.

7.2 Earlier this year the Council tried to resurrect the Loft Theatre relocation scheme but were unsuccessful in their bid for funding from the new 'Growing Places Fund' which is managed by the Coventry & Warwickshire Local

Enterprise Partnership. The Loft Theatre Company have subsequently notified us that they are no longer interested in moving into the URC.

- 7.3 As a result officers have been looking for alternative uses for the building and have been approached by the Warwickshire County Music Service (CMS), currently run by Warwickshire County Council. The CMS has recently been successful in securing Arts Council England revenue funding until 2015 to set up a music 'hub' for the County and it is now looking for a suitable base to bring all its different services together under one roof
- 7.4 CMS provides instrumental, vocal and curriculum music across a full range of educational settings as well as through four area music centres located across Warwickshire.
- 7.5 The URC offers the potential of a large performance space to showcase CMS activity as well as space for offices, rehearsals and study which could provide long term usage of the building and complement other activities taking place in Spencer Yard. There is also opportunity to offer these spaces to other arts organisations and performance companies.
- 7.6 From the Council's perspective this is a chance to find a long term use for this listed building that complements the existing arts activities and organisations based in the North Hall and West Wing buildings that were refurbished in 2006 as part of the Regenesys regeneration programme.