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**FINAL OUTTURN REPORT CROWN STREET LIBRARY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member –  
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Dave Winstanley**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To report the lessons learned from the Crown Street Library Refurbishment Project and the final outturn in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules.

**Summary**

2. Following consideration of whether to vacate the Crown Street library as a proposed cost-savings exercise, Cabinet took the decision in January 2019 that the Council should instead retain and enhance the existing facility. An alternative option – to operate a smaller facility within the Dolphin Centre was rejected.
3. The project entailed firstly repairing the fabric and decoration of the building; roof, M&E and windows as well as full redecoration whilst being sympathetic to the heritage of the Crown Street building; and secondly improving the customer experience by providing much improved facilities for accessing literature and creative activities, improved IT, creating a much-improved children's zone, improving access, and modernising the overall "visitor experience".
4. Para 43 of the Financial Procedure Rules requires that the final outturn of all schemes with a value in excess of £1 million be reported to Cabinet.
5. The report reviews the actual cost, timeliness and quality including lessons learned; to ensure a continuous review of capital planning, management and reporting, with regard to best practice, experience and opportunities for improving the Council's capital and asset management processes.

**Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that Members note the final outturn of the Project.

**Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) To comply with the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules.
- (b) To ensure a continuous review of capital planning, management and reporting, with regard to best practice, experience and opportunities for improving the Council’s capital and asset management processes.

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct impacts
Health and Well Being	Improved social and educational facility
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	
Diversity	
Wards Affected	The project is in Park East ward but benefits the entire borough.
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	
Key Decision	This is not a Key Decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Urgent Decision
Council Plan	One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. Improved and accessible education resources for children and adults
Efficiency	
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	

**MAIN REPORT**

**Information and Analysis**

- 8. The Council was required to review expenditure on its assets and services in response to its ongoing, challenging financial position. Accordingly the operation of a relatively costly service within an older building requiring a complex range of repair and refurbishment works was investigated.
- 9. With strong local support, it was decided that to downsize the service, for example, to move it to the Dolphin Centre was inappropriate for the town’s main library (one of only two in Darlington).
- 10. The decision was made to upgrade the library by improving its connectivity, provide a range of activity and learning rooms and in particular create a high-quality children’s reading area. The aim was to establish the library as a key public asset, fit for the 21st Century, for all of the community to use and to be free and accessible to all. It furthermore secured the future of a landmark building in the town.

11. Initial surveys revealed the building had a number of areas requiring attention, with the complex roof being of particular concern. In addition it required decorating throughout and improved access and fire controls to improve its safety.
12. As the building was further surveyed costs increased from the initial estimates as the roof repair costs in particular mounted and the scaffolding solution to safely access and work on it were defined. The project became considerably more challenging due to the restrictions arising from COVID working practices and related supply chain shortages and rising costs.
13. A specialist libraries internal design company, Design Concept, were engaged to design the children's area and improve the overall internal space. SPACE Architectures were also employed to develop the design and the works were taken forward with DBC Building Services acting as main contractor.
14. The anticipated project cost, once an initial design had been developed, was £3.281m. On completion the full cost was calculated to be £3.730m. Over half of the increase related to the scaffolding and roof works (exacerbated by the COVID impact).
15. The works were completed shortly before a week of launch events in October 2023. The public response was very positive with significantly greater numbers attending the library.
16. An application was submitted to the Constructing Excellence North East (CENE) Awards (Conservation and Regeneration Section). The project made the shortlist and was highly commended for its quality of work.
17. Para 43 of the Financial Procedure Rules requires that the final outturn of all schemes with a value in excess of £1 million be reported to Cabinet.
18. The report reviews the actual cost, timeliness and quality including lessons learned to ensure a continuous review of capital planning, management and reporting, with regard to best practice, experience and opportunities for improving the Council's capital and asset management processes.

## Cost

19. The table below summarises the project budget and final outturn.:

Original Approved Budget	Revised Approved Budget	Project Outturn	Variance	Variance (%)
£3,281,436	£3,422,936	£3,729,914	£306,978	9%

20. The increase to the final project costs, take into account significant increases to the scaffold and roof repair costs, additional COVID 19 delay delivery costs and increases to materials and labour that arose during and following the COVID epidemic.

## Quality

21. The project met all standards laid out in the appropriate Building Regulations and in the Planning and Listed Building Consent requirements. The building was shortlisted for the CENE Awards in recognition of its quality.

## Time

22. The table below summarises the project timeline:

Original Planned Project Completion Date (CP1)	Revised Approved Project Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Schedule Variation (days)
9 February 2023	1 September 2023	1 September 2023	0

23. The revised project completion date was primarily a result of (i) COVID delays and (ii) roof delays as a result of having to time works to meet bat legislation and the fact that the complex roof works took longer than anticipated, exacerbated by a major sub-contractor going bust shortly before works were about to commence.

## Lessons Learned

24. The Asset Management and Capital Programme Review Board (AM&CPRB or AMG) has specific roles defined in the Council's Constitution. The Board shall maintain a continuous review of capital planning, management and reporting, with regard to best practice, experience and opportunities for improving the Council's capital and asset management.
25. The key findings and lessons learned from this project are summarised below:
- (a) Works carried out during the first COVID restrictions slowed progress due to the onerous working requirements. The team gained a better understanding of requirements as they progressed and should comparable restrictions come into force again, there should be a better understanding of how to mitigate them.
  - (b) The library roof cost and duration of works were considerably greater than first estimates indicated. More in-depth surveying could have benefitted the budgeting and programming of this element given its complex nature, but it would not likely have fully mitigated them.
  - (c) Holding public drop-in consultation sessions and providing regular PR on progress improved public participation in the design and informed DBC of local priorities. It likely also reduced potential criticism of the disturbance to the service during construction.
  - (d) Use of a specialist library interior designer yielded excellent results and the Council received considerable praise for the quality of the internal fit-out (especially the children's zone.) This demonstrates the values in employing specialist designers in certain circumstances.

## **Procurement**

26. It was agreed by Cabinet in January 2019 that works be managed by the authority's Building Services section. A number of subconsultants and subcontractors were employed to design and deliver the works.

## **Contract Management**

27. The main contract was delivered in the spirit of the JCT Standard Form of Contract 2011.

## **Health & Safety**

28. For the construction phase, the Principal Designer role for the scheme was delivered by Andrew Bumfrey of SPACE Architecture. No reportable accidents were recorded during the construction phase.

## **Risk Log**

29. The risk log for the scheme was regularly reviewed and risks which could be transferred onto the Principal Contractor were included within the main construction contract. The risk log was fully closed down prior to the end of the project.

## **Communications**

30. The communications strategy for the project was managed by Community Services. A wide range of consultation and profile-raising activities were maintained throughout the project and a week of launch events were held in October 2023, which were well attended and led to greater use of the building.