

FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND - STOCKROOM

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Place and Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate and Support Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To provide an update on progress with Stockport's Future High Street Fund project, Stockroom and seek support and approval on the proposals
- 1.2. To update Cabinet on the recent consultation undertaken and seek approval to relocate the town centre library offer from Central Library into Stockroom.
- 1.3. To seek delegated authority:
 - 1.3.1. to appoint a contractor to deliver the refurbishment works and execute any necessary letter of intent or other agreement, pending resolution of the final contract, to maintain progress in connection with the redevelopment of Stockroom;
 - 1.3.2. to take the necessary steps to implement the strategy set out in this report;
 - 1.3.3. to approve an Operational Business Plan for Stockroom.
- 1.4. To provide an update regarding potential future uses of the existing Central Library Building and obtain approval to the proposed course of action set out in Section 10 to progress these.

2. THE STOCKROOM VISION

- 2.1. Stockroom is going to deliver a whole new public service offer for the residents of Stockport – providing a new learning and discovery hub at the heart of the town centre which will inspire, entertain and support all the people of the Borough.
- 2.2. With an injection of £14.5m of Government investment in a council asset where we can repurpose redundant retail space, we can completely transform a large area of our shopping centre into a free-at-the-point-of-access place for our residents to explore their heritage, learn more about their area, spend time with friends and family in a completely safe and welcoming space, and get access to the wealth of services the Council and its partners have to offer from book borrowing, access to archives, public health support, performance space and meeting rooms that are completely accessible and so easy to find.
- 2.3. In line with ambitions set out in the Borough Plan, Stockroom will be a place that brings our communities together, celebrating our heritage and supporting people to achieve their ambitions.

- 2.4. It is an opportunity to improve facilities and outcomes for local residents, both current and future in the Town Centre but also be equally as available to the wider Borough and beyond. With the ambition to build 6,000 new homes in the Town Centre over the next 15 years, this will be an important facility to support this growth.
- 2.5. It will form another piece of the jigsaw of regeneration and transformation that is ongoing across the whole Town Centre and has already seen successes in Stockport Exchange, Redrock, the Markets and Underbanks and the emerging work at Stockport Interchange and of the Mayoral Development Corporation.
- 2.6. We have spent the last few months talking with the residents of Stockport about what they want from this new facility and this paper sets out what they have said and our response to this.
- 2.7. We are now at the stage of finalising the scope for this project and progressing on site prior to opening in summer 2023, and this paper sets out the key elements of the new facility, shares some of the design work so far, and sets out the range of Council services that may be offered in the new facility.
- 2.8. The work over the last six months since last consideration by members at Scrutiny and Cabinet highlighted many things for further thought such as how can we deliver even higher accessibility standards in Stockroom to reflect the state of the art facility, as well as how to meet the needs of young people and make it as operationally and financially efficient as possible
- 2.9. One of the other major considerations in developing the proposals has been how this project can further stimulate investment and footfall in the wider Town Centre, and how by investment in new amenity, toilets and concierge facilities we can make this a place that is really felt to be of benefit to local retailers and wider town centre businesses.
- 2.10. There are many benefits and opportunities to partner and develop new relationships with voluntary, community and business organisations in terms of utilising the facility and we want to develop these relationships over the coming months.
- 2.11. We have also explored through a formal consultation the option of moving and expanding the full library service from current location in Central Library Building into Stockroom – the outcome of this consultation is provided in detail later in the report and in the appendices with the overall recommendation that we do incorporate and expand the library offer in Stockport Town Centre by moving service provision into Stockroom.
- 2.12. One of the key considerations in relation to moving the Library Services has been what happens to the Central Library Building that we know and have had reinforced through the consultation exercise is so beloved of the people of Stockport. This report therefore sets out options for the future use of this important building which have been costed and are deliverable, to ensure the protection of the building for the community and heritage access for many years to come.

- 2.13. The report sets out the operational aspects of Stockroom and gives assurance that future running costs can be contained within our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and operational parameters and where possible offering more services, for longer opening hours within the same financial envelope.
- 2.14. Finally the report sets out the delivery programme and opportunities for further engagement and development over the coming months as further detailed design develops.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Government announced the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) in the Autumn Budget of 2018 with the aim of renewing and reshaping town centres and High Streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures the future sustainability of our town centres.
- 3.2. On 26th December 2020 the Government announced that Stockport had been successful, securing its full request of £14.5m FHSF capital funding. Stockport was one of only four high streets in the North West, and only fifteen nationally which were awarded the full funding request in the first round of bidding.
- 3.3. Subsequently a report to Cabinet in June 2021 set out plans regarding engagement and consultation on the proposed FHSF project 'Stockroom' (working title).

4. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND

- 4.1. The Fund was announced as an integral part of the Government's Plan for the High Street and invited authorities to bid on co-funded capital projects which would transformative change and bring forward innovative regeneration proposals around transport, housing delivery and public services. The prospectus and guidance produced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) clearly set out that any bid must be able to deliver against the objective of the Fund, namely:

"to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability".

It also expected that projects put forward for funding would deliver a catalytic effect on the wider town centre regeneration.

- 4.2. The Stockport response to the Expression of Interest focussed around a number of projects in Merseyway:
 - **Adlington Walk** – a new arrival point for the High Street incorporating a new 'hotel lobby' style entrance with concierge, high quality toilets, new entrance from the car park and a number of features to improve the customer experience.

- **Merseyway Innovation Centre** – providing new shared workplace in vacant first floor space in Merseyway in the former Next unit
 - **Stockroom** (Working Title) – a future-focussed community hub. This would incorporate a learning and discovery space which could include a 21st century library offer, a new cultural and museum experience, multi-functional space for use by communities and schools and access to a variety of public services
- 4.3. The proposal will repurpose approximately 71,400 sq.ft. of vacant retail and ancillary space which comprises 9,200 sq.ft. in Adlington Walk, 15,200 sq.ft. in the Merseyway Innovation Centre and 47,000 sq.ft. in Stockroom. This is approximately the same size as a football pitch.
 - 4.4. Councils were invited to submit an initial Expression of Interest in March 2019 and Stockport were advised that they had been successful in progressing to a Full Business Case in July 2019.
 - 4.5. MHCLG originally required the Full Business Case submitted in March 2020 but this submission deadline was extended to June 2020 as a result of the pandemic. This was accompanied by a letter of support from the MPs for Stockport, Denton and Reddish and Hazel Grove.
 - 4.6. On 26th December 2020 the Government announced that Stockport had been successful, securing its full request of £14.5m FHSF capital funding. Stockport were one of only four high streets in the North West, and only fifteen nationally which were awarded the full funding request.
 - 4.7. The submissions were reviewed by MHCLG to see how they delivered against the objectives of the fund and also against the HM Treasury Green Book appraisal methodologies and criteria requiring a 'benefit-cost ratio' (BCR) to be over a minimum threshold of 1.5. Failure to achieve this would rule out any bids from progressing further.
 - 4.8. The BCR benefits are primarily based on future land value uplift based on a programme of regeneration in the town, which Stockroom is key part of, helping to encourage wider development and confidence as the market grows. The BCR also includes the amenity benefits arising from associated public realm investment and reduced energy use / carbon saving as activity is accommodated in a modern, energy efficient building. The BCR calculations were undertaken by a specialist economic consultant and verified by Government as part of their bid assessment process.

5. THE COMPONENT PARTS OF STOCKROOM

- 5.1. The proposed design of Stockroom has been informed by work over a number of months and engagement with a variety of internal and external stakeholders to ensure that we maximise the opportunity that is offered by the space.
- 5.2. We have also listened to what the residents of the Borough have said that they would like to see in the space through the engagement and consultation process set out in Section 6 and this has been reflected in the designs produced.

- 5.3. Stockroom will be a unique space for Stockport – a learning and discovery space in which visitors to the venue can socialise or enjoy the surroundings for pleasure; can engage with literature, history and culture; can learn new skills; and where Stockroom can also be the “front door” to a range of information and support provided by the council and other partners.
- 5.4. As well as being a flagship community and cultural venue for Stockport, Stockroom can also help address some of the challenges faced by the Central Area of Stockport, where it will also act as a local library, around literacy, public health and digital access and inclusion. There are 11,000 adults in Stockport who have real trouble reading. For them, everyday tasks such as booking a doctor’s appointment, reading road signs or food shopping can be incredibly challenging.
- 5.5. Leading architects and designers, AEW and Space Invader have been appointed to undertake the design work for Stockroom. A design pack with iterative floor plans and CGI’s of the Stockroom development is included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.6. The proposed component parts of Stockroom are summarised below. These are consistent with these aims of the fund and with the successful bid.

5.6.1. **Library**

A 21st Century library offer with access to both physical and digital content and public access IT provision.

The DCMS (Department for Culture Media and Sport) Libraries Taskforce identified 7 outcomes that library services can contribute to. These are:

- cultural and creative enrichment
- increased reading and literacy
- improved digital access and literacy
- helping everyone achieve their full potential
- healthier and happier lives
- greater prosperity
- stronger, more resilient communities

These can be best achieved by bringing together traditional library services with other services that can also deliver against these outcomes and Stockroom seeks to do this.

The library will be a crucial component in the creation of a dynamic cultural centre for Stockport. The library element of Stockroom will enable all the books currently displayed at the Central Library Building to be on display with the ability for a further 5,000 books to be displayed within Stockroom due to the increase in usable space available. An investment in additional books is planned as part of the project.

5.6.2. **Discovery Centre**

Stockroom will be a place of discovery showcasing Stockport's local history and character with curated spaces that feature 'Stockport Stories' located throughout the venue. These will be based around the artefacts held by both the museum and heritage library collections. It is envisaged that these 'stories' will change regularly with curation through the Stockroom management team. Work to identify and develop the first set of 'Stockport Stories' will be done with members of the public who have expressed an interest in helping to develop Stockroom.

The Discovery Centre will allow visitors to experience the Borough's extensive cultural collections in new and more accessible ways. Stockroom will feature a modern archival storage, protecting the Museum and Heritage collections for the future.

5.6.3. **Classroom facilities and study space**

The first floor of Stockroom will feature high quality classroom space suitable for a range of ages and uses that will link with the Discovery Centre and the wider Stockroom offer to provide a dedicated space for learning opportunities. Linking with the adjacent 'Air Raid Shelter' attraction, Stockroom will be a base for school parties and other visitors to the town's attractions.

Independent study space will be available throughout Stockroom, with quiet booths and bespoke study spaces located across the first floor. Stockroom has the capacity to increase the availability of these spaces at times of high demand in the academic year, when flexible space can be given over to study space to support additional demand around exams and revision time. The classroom space will also be available to support Education Services in a range of ways and will be suitable to cater for different ages and needs.

5.6.4. **Sensory Room**

Located close to the classroom facilities, the Sensory room will be a quiet space dedicated to stimulating, developing and relaxing the senses. The room will provide a therapeutic environment which would be particularly suited for children with autism and other special educational needs but which could also be enjoyed by babies, smaller children and some adults with sensory needs. This will complement the classroom facilities and other services expected to be located in Stockroom.

5.6.5. **Makers space**

A multi-use hub for creative activities, workshops, events and hands-on learning. Incorporating craft opportunities, and classes to learn new skills. This was a popular potential use in the engagement done in July this year. Work is ongoing with a potential third-party occupier and curator for the Makers Space already operating from a temporary unit in the town. As well as classes in ceramics and woodworking, they will offer a programme of classes and events promoting ways to live a more sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle.

The Makers Space offers the opportunity to tie in with Public Health initiatives and Social Prescribing to support improved well-being in borough.

5.6.6. Advice and Support

The central location of Stockroom makes it ideal for providing residents with an access point to a variety of Council and partner help networks offering advice on matters such as housing, finances and benefits, skills and employment and health and wellbeing, providing residents with a single centrally located “front door” to a range of information, advice, and support offered by the council and partner organisations. The Stockroom team will be on hand to answer resident queries and will be able to signpost to and arrange more specialist advice and support where this is needed.

5.6.7. Drop in services

There are a further range of council and partner services which can be provided on a drop-in basis and whilst not necessarily based there permanently will allow residents to access them regularly. These include the registration of births and provision of face-to-face advice and guidance with domestic planning matters. Digital support, including sessions with digital champions, will also be one of the core Stockroom offers. We are continuing to actively explore other complementary drop in activities for the space and will do so up to opening and beyond.

5.6.8. Health & Well-Being services

Stockroom is envisaged to be a key component of a town centre health and wellbeing offer with advice and information readily available to support residents to maintain and improve their health and wellbeing. Working with colleagues in Public Health and with wider health partners a planned programme of wellness initiatives will be able to take place in Stockroom.

This could include a wide range of services such as children’s health advice, health checks or screening, smoking cessation advice, awareness raising and involvement in social prescribing. There will be the opportunity to provide services that complement one another at the same time. For example, children’s health advice could be a complementary service for parents that are registering a birth; and financial advice could be complemented with health advice such as smoking cessation.

5.6.9. Flexible Community Space

Stockroom will offer flexible community space. This will include smaller tables which small groups could meet around; open spaces which could be used for pop up events and activities such as talks, activities, taster sessions, displays or advice; and private hire rooms for events, meetings and workshops (approx 600 sq.ft.). An affordable stepped pricing structure will be developed to ensure that rates are reasonable for use of the space and take into consideration the nature of the activity taking place and the type of organisation making the booking. Some activities will continue to be free – for example the types of

group usage that typically takes place at the Central Library building such as reading or other small social groups who are able to make use of the space for meetings.

5.6.10. Event Space

The first floor features high quality space that can be hired for a range of events from business meetings and conferences to fayres, product launches and special events. The 3,300 sq.ft. of space can be partitioned to allow two events to take place simultaneously. With access directly onto the first floor balcony, events in this space would have the opportunity to utilise external space, bring more animation to the streetscape and creating a point of interest overlooking the main Merseyway Mall.

A report has been commissioned to provide more detail on the demand for this space in the context of the Council's current events portfolio. It will be important that the event space in Stockroom complements the Council's offer elsewhere in the town, as well as the Merseyway Innovation Centre, which will be adjacent to Stockroom and will have capacity for more than 50 new SMEs. Further work will be done to determine the market position of the events space and included within the final business plan for Stockroom.

5.6.11. A flexible Performance Space

Located on the ground floor, a performance area with raked seating to accommodate approx. 50 people in the round, will provide another feature element to the ground floor of Stockroom. The seating is clustered around a space for performance that can be used for talks, poetry readings, musical performances or just as a place for a school party to gather and have lunch. The seating is not fixed so can be stored when not in use to free up further space on the Stockroom 'shop-floor' for other activities.

5.6.12. Café

The cafe is the central point within Stockroom. Wrapping round a central staircase it acts as a pivot point for each of the complementary offers and services within Stockroom. It will draw visitors into the space and create a sense of arrival, with opportunities to signpost a range of services from this central feature. Kitchen facilities in the basement are linked to the servery counter, with the potential to cater for events booked elsewhere in Stockroom providing a potential income stream for the development. Work is being undertaken to explore the most appropriate model for the café in terms of strategic fit within the current Town Centre offer, suitability to the Stockroom vision, and potential to provide an income for the development.

5.6.13. Visitor information

Stockroom is at the heart of the Town Centre and can provide visitor information and concierge services to help people access all the town has to offer and to guide visitors to what's on and where things are.

5.6.14. Interactive features

Stockroom will include interactive elements which make learning and heritage come to life in an exciting way involving new technology. We are working with well-known leaders in this type of feature, Recursive, to deliver something which specific to Stockport that will provide animation, information and points of interest across the whole space.

5.6.15. Toilets and amenity space

As part of the wider Stockroom scheme in Adlington Walk, there will be new customer welcome facilities which will provide a new 'arrival point' for visitors to the Town Centre. This will feature new 'best in class' toilets with enhanced provision for disabled people, a 'Changing Places' facility, parent and child room, a quiet room for prayer or reflection and a new stair and lift core that will bring people from the car park above right into the heart of Stockroom.

- 5.7. In addition, ways to include further suggested uses made through the recent engagement and consultation are being explored by the Stockroom project team.
- 5.8. Additionally new shared workspace for entrepreneurs and start-ups will be provide in the Merseyway Innovation Centre offering flexible workspace in the Town Centre to incubate those businesses and give them the best possible chance of success. A floor plan of the Innovation Centre is included as part of appendix 1.
- 5.9. Grahams Construction who were already procured to undertake the Adlington Walk scheme pre-pandemic, have been appointed as the contractor.

6. INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILTY

- 6.1. Stockroom will be a fully accessible building, welcoming to everyone. It will act as a new arrival point for visitors to the Town Centre and as a gateway for pedestrian access into the Merseyway Centre. New public realm works with DDA compliant access will improve routes into the shopping centre from Chestergate and the Underbanks area.
- 6.2. The space, layout and provision of the new toilets exceeds the requirements of Building Regulations and current quality standards (including BS 8300:2009 + A1: 2010), offering more spacious and accessible WC facilities to improve the experience for all users. We are proposing enlarged accessible WC facilities including lobby areas to accommodate mobility vehicles. In addition, a fully equipped Changing Places facility will be provided, the first of its kind in the centre and only the second in Stockport, which will host facilities for people with more profound disabilities and assistance for their carers. Accessible, parent and child and gender neutral WCs are provided throughout the building.
- 6.3. Stockroom will also feature a dedicated parent and child facility with private spaces for breastfeeding, changing and areas to keep young ones occupied. This also includes a family WC for use by toddlers and those with pushchairs.

- 6.4. A sensory room is to be located adjacent to the classroom at first floor to provide a safe space for anyone who needs it, as well as a quiet room at ground floor which can be used for those with additional needs. Alternatively, this space is located close to an ablution room, meaning it can be utilised for private prayer if required.
- 6.5. The layout of Stockroom will follow a similarly inclusive approach, with a mix of settings to offer comfort and accessibility for all ages and abilities. Safe spaces and areas that can be privately enclosed when required are arranged throughout the space to give people the chance to move to a quiet location when needed.
- 6.6. All of our touch screen tablets that are mounted on furniture as public information podiums are offered at dual height to accommodate those that many need lower access such as wheelchair users and children. The contrast in colour and texture when applied to walls, floor and furniture finishes will assist those with Dementia and Autism to navigate the space. Stockroom will feature induction loops throughout and will comply with all Light Reflectance Value (LRV) contrast requirements to assist those who are partially sighted to navigate the space.
- 6.7. During the construction and fit-out of Stockroom the Council will be working with a range of stakeholders to ensure Stockroom is as accessible and inclusive a space as it can possibly be. The Council has already consulted with a number of groups representing people with a range of disabilities, and this will continue as Stockroom develops.
- 6.8. The design team will contain an Accessibility Consultant who will provide advice and support on the design, operation and usage of Stockroom.

7. ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 7.1. In May 2019, the Council engaged with stakeholders and the public regarding a scheme which would later form part of the FHSF submission, the redevelopment of Adlington Walk in Merseyway. This followed Cabinet approval November 2018 to refurbish part of Adlington Walk with a new toilet and amenity block. As part of this engagement, the Council talked with people about the new facilities planned for Adlington Walk and about what other complementary services they would find useful located in Merseyway. This included a library kiosk as to give Central Library a small additional presence in Merseyway to give extra access and convenience for limited library services.
- 7.2. A range of complementary services were suggested through this engagement and these helped to inform the wider ambitions for regenerating Merseyway and specifically the final submission to the FHSF in June 2020.
- 7.3. In June 2021, the Cabinet made the decision to proceed with further engagement and consultation on the emerging Stockroom proposal. The purpose was to share the work done to date with stakeholders and residents and gather views on whether the potential uses for Stockroom are what people would like to see in the Town Centre. The engagement also sought views on other uses or services which residents would like to see included, consistent with the overall ambition for Stockroom as a community learning and discovery hub.

- 7.4. The draft materials proposed for the first phase of engagement were presented to an Extraordinary joint meeting of the Corporate Resources Management and Governance (CRMG) and Economy and Regeneration (E&R) Scrutiny Committees on 30th June 2021. A range of amendments to the text and tone of the materials were made following comments by members of the committee.
- 7.5. The report approved by Cabinet also recommended that if there was support to include a 21st century Library offer within Stockroom then the second phase of the Engagement and Consultation plan would be a formal consultation on the relocation of Library Services from the existing Central Library Building.
- 7.6. Through the engagement, it was clear that there was clear support for repurposing vacant retail units in Merseyway to form Stockroom, as well as support for elements of a 21st Century library offer to be included. This triggered the formal consultation mentioned above.
- 7.7. A report on the first phase engagement responses and the draft materials proposed for the formal consultation were presented to an Extraordinary joint meeting of the CRMG and E&R Scrutiny Committees on 17th August 2021. This followed the request made by that committee on 30th June 2021 to have an opportunity to help shape any subsequent formal consultation. Comments and changes suggested by the Scrutiny Committee were incorporated into the documents prior to the consultation starting.
- 7.8. The consultation period began on 23rd August 2021 and ended on 18th October 2021 and was carried out by specialist, independent Market Research consultants, QA Research who designed and lead the consultation activity and analysis to ensure that as many views as possible were sought on the proposals and that both the consultation and analysis of this were robust.
- 7.9. QA's work was carried out in compliance with the International standard ISO 20252, (the International Standard for Market and Social research), The Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and UK Data Protection law. A report on the phase 2 consultation is included in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 7.10. In addition the online survey materials are included in Appendix 3 of this report
- 7.11. The Cabinet report in June 2021 also referenced that a third phase of engagement may take place dependant on the outcome of the first two phases. Given the level of feedback received from the first two phases, it is proposed the further engagement will take place throughout 2022 to ensure that residents are both informed of the more detailed plans and layouts for Stockroom as they emerge and have the opportunity to provide further feedback on what they would like to see in Stockroom.

8. CONSULTATION RESPONSES ON RELOCATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

- 8.1. As referenced above, following the first phase of engagement, a formal consultation process began on 23rd August 2021 and ran for eight weeks. A range of methodologies were adopted for the formal consultation to ensure a

wide range of views were heard about the proposals and the consultation provided a robust basis on which to make any decision about the relocation of the library service. The details are included in QA Research report in Appendix 2.

8.2. The aims of the formal consultation were;

- Ensure the views of a wide range of audiences are included in the consultation;
- Understand current usage patterns of the Central Library;
- Gauge support for the proposal to move library services from Central Library Building to Stockroom;
- Explore reasons for agreement and disagreement with the proposal;
- Measure likely future use of library services if moved to Stockroom;
- Identify any differences in attitude between different demographic groups.

8.3. Face to face surveys

This element of the consultation was conducted by a third party, independent market research company, QA Research. It consisted of using quantitative face-to-face interviews with members of the public in Stockport. It also allowed QA to ensure that a representative sample of the adult population of Stockport, as minimum quotas were applied based on age bands, gender and ethnicity. They also carried out sufficient surveys to ensure that the results are within the industry standard error rate of +/-5%.

In total 566 surveys were completed with adults from across the borough. 70% of the respondents were from SK1, SK2, SK3, SK4 or SK5 postcodes.

Following a summary of the proposal to move library services from Central Library to Stockroom, residents were then asked how far they agree or disagree with the proposal to move library services.

- 47% of residents strongly agreed or tended to agree with the proposal
- 29% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the proposal
- 19% neither agree nor disagree
- 6% didn't know

The top 5 reasons for agreement were:

- Better accessibility overall
- More central
- Will attract more people
- Welcome new facilities to ensure high service-level library in Stockport
- A good facility for the community – families, students, young people etc

The top 5 reasons for disagreement were:

- Library is fine where it is; people identify with it being there
- Building should be retained as part of the listed historical heritage of Stockport
- It is a beautiful example of architecture in a lovely peaceful setting

- Concern over what will happen to the existing building after the move
- It is a well-known landmark for the area and should be preserved

As part of the work to obtain the representative sample of Stockport residents, QA Research also interviewed 155 visitors to the town. These included shopping visitors, leisure visitors, workers and business travellers who gave their address as being outside of Stockport.

- 60% of visitors strongly agreed or tended to agree with the proposal
- 11% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the proposal
- 19% neither agree nor disagree
- 10% didn't know

8.4. Online self completion questionnaire

The second methodology was Internet survey hosted on the Council's website. This produced 1,752 responses has been analysed by QA Research and is also within the standard industry error rate.

QA have made the observation that this sample is significantly skewed towards existing Central Library users (85% of responses) compared to 44% of Stockport residents in the face-to-face surveys.

There is also a difference in the postcode data for these surveys with only 55% of respondents who provided their postcode coming from SK1 to SK5 as opposed to 70% in the face-to-face responses. 38% came from SK6, SK7 and SK8 as opposed to 24% in the face-to-face surveys.

Following a summary of the proposal to move library services from Central Library to Stockroom, residents were then asked how far they agree or disagree with the proposal to move library services.

- 38% of residents strongly agreed or tended to agree with the proposal
- 55% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with the proposal
- 6% neither agree nor disagree
- 1% didn't know

The top 5 reasons for agreement were:

- Better accessibility
- Better location or central
- Improved or modern services & facilities available
- Higher footfall and would use more often
- Need a new or modern building

The top 5 reasons for disagreement were:

- Historic or beautiful building and atmosphere needs to be protected
- Library is purpose built or should remain as currently (single function or quiet)
- Should invest more in current site

- Dislike or would not visit new location
- Current site is local or easy to access

8.5. Children's survey

A version of the questionnaire with language more tailored to those under 16 and without the demographic questions was distributed through schools and youth groups and 150 responses were received. Although the sample size was relatively small, it does provide the most positive support for the proposal and addresses under-representation of those under 16 in other consultation methodologies.

The respondents were predominantly 15-17 year olds (82%) with the vast majority (82%) not currently using Central Library.

When asked how far they agree or disagree with the proposal to move library services.

- 65% thought it was a good idea
- 31% were unsure
- 4% thought it was a bad idea

56% said that the proposal would make no difference to them but 37% said it would make them more likely to use the library.

8.6. Focus Groups (Public)

QA Research managed four focus groups with people from the following groups;

- Parents with school aged children
- People with disabilities or long term health conditions
- Older people (all aged 65+)
- Younger people – all pre family lifestage

There is no quantitative data from these groups and the outputs are detailed in the QA Research report included as Appendix 2 to this report, but in line with the responses above their were mixed views expressed by the groups. As seen in the other methodologies, there was substantial affection for the building and concerns regarding its future, together with an appreciation of the need to improve facilities in Town Centre.

8.7. Focus Groups (Staff)

Library staff were invited to share their opinions about the proposal via two workshops. 14 staff attended and this included a mixture of staff members and team leaders who currently work within either Central Library or One Stockport Hub.

Participants were asked for their views on the proposal to move library services from Central Library to Stockport and these views ranged from neutral to positive; no staff member indicated a negative view. Key themes included; it would encourage emerging readers; a new demographic and the location is more

accessible. Some talked about the potential for working in a modern library building and the opportunity to attract more footfall than Central Library currently receives.

Staff members wanted to be reassured that there would be enough space allocated to the library with plenty of book stock on display and would also welcome the inclusion of quiet spaces being available. They felt the proposal is future looking and gives the opportunity to collaborate with other organisations and to engage with a wider demographic from more passers-by. Some staff mentioned the one-off opportunity to spend a significant amount of money on the new library and how this could not happen again. Modern, interactive display and events were discussed and how this proposal is ground-breaking and 'of the times'.

8.8. Local boards, forums and community groups

Members of the project team visited or sent information to a range of local boards, forums and community groups throughout the engagement and consultation period to inform them of the consultation and ask them to cascade through their networks. These forums included the Economic Alliance, Stockport Family Partnership Board, Thriving Communities Board, Primary and Secondary Heads Consortiums, Cross Sector Forum, SEND inclusion community group, Youth engagement group, Disability Stockport, Seashell Trust, Stockport Homes Roadshows, The Proud Trust and the Totally Stockport Board.

In addition, a report was presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board in October this year about the proposals. The board welcomed the report and the proposals to repurpose vacant retail space. In addition to encouraging residents to take part in the consultation, the board made the following comments.

The Health and Wellbeing Board:

- Congratulated the Council on the inclusion of agreed pledges for the future use of the Central Library Building.
- Recognised the decline in trends of visitors at Stockport Central Library, however held concerns in relation to the repurposing of the building and retaining the building as a heritage asset.
- Commented that the new location of the library as a new learning and discovery place was well located and would generate large footfall.
- Suggested that consideration should also be given to developing general practice and creating an integrated wellbeing hub at the site.
- Were reassured that a robust engagement programme had been undertaken which included on street interviews, online questionnaire and discussions with a range of organisations.
- Welcomed the results of the engagement survey and overall methodology which incorporated a range of opinions from various groups.

Voluntary and community sector organisations commented that there are a lot of people who love the Central Library building but felt that people are not using the facilities that are inside the building. They believed the new space could be more accessible and user friendly especially if there are more conversations like these where people who know about these types of obstacles and concerns can have an input. Many commented that they felt the potential to incorporate a range of activities and services for residents was positive and exciting.

This theme of continual collaboration on the accessibility and services that could be available in Stockroom was also raised at the SEND Inclusion Community group, the Youth Participation engagement session and during conversations with staff members of Walthew House. They would like to continue these conversations to ensure that everyone is able to access and enjoy the facilities in the future.

8.9. Petitions received

During the consultation period, full Council meetings received two petitions against the removal of library services from Central Library Building.

The first was received from Stockport Unite Against Austerity and had started as a petition asking the Council to 'rescind the proposal to close and replace the Central Library with a much reduced library service'. This related to the temporary move of library services to One Stockport Hub and was presented to full Council on 22nd October 2020 and contained 4,001 signatures. This was amended earlier this year to 'Drop the proposal to close and replace the Central Library with a much reduced library service located in the Merseyway retail precinct'. The petition wasn't reset at this point and the total number of signatures received for both versions of the petition was 7,404 when last received at the Council Meeting on 7th October 2021.

The second petition was organised by Stockport Liberal Democrats titled 'Maintain the Library Service at Stockport Central Library and was also received at the Council Meeting on 7th October 2021 comprising 846 signatures.

8.10. MP representation

As part of the consultation on the relocation of library services from the Central Library Building, Navendu Mishra MP submitted a representation expressing concerns over the proposed move to Stockroom and the future of the Central Library Building.

8.11. Support from the local business community

The proposals were presented to the board of the Business Improvement District and a letter of support was provided through the consultation period. The BID represents over 500 levy paying businesses in the Town Centre. The proposals also went before the Stockport Economic Alliance where it was also well received.

8.12. Equalities Impact Assessment

This has been developed throughout the engagement and consultation and is included as Appendix 4 to this report. A summary is provided in section 15 below.

9. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION FINDINGS AND RATIONALE FOR RELOCATION

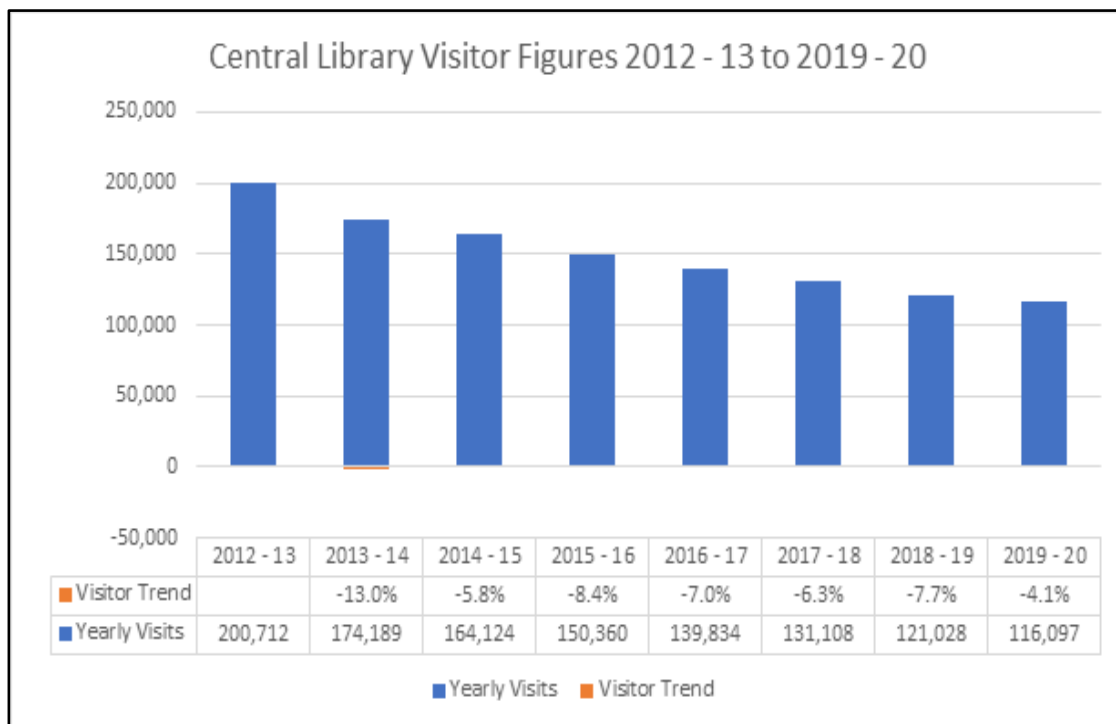
- 9.1. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 section 7 (amended by the Local Government Act 1972) requires local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons who live, work or study in the area.
- 9.2. The consultation on the relocation of library services has received a mixed response with both support received for the proposals and objections against.
- 9.3. Those in favour of the relocation have stated the benefit of new modern facilities in a better accessible and more central location than the current Central Library Building.
- 9.4. Those who are opposed to the move have expressed concerns about the future of the Central Library Building and in some cases the preference to keep the current library service in this building, as this is what it was intended for. However very few of those who disagree with the relocation provided a view or evidence that they or others would be disadvantaged by a move of services to Stockroom.
- 9.5. Whilst it is recognised that there is strong affection for both the building and the service that has been provided from there for the last 100 years, it is felt that there has not been an sufficiently compelling argument made to keep the service in the existing building when balanced against the opportunity to provide a new community facility on the scale of Stockroom in Merseyway and the difficulties in providing an enhanced offer in Central Library Building.
- 9.6. The following is from the Carnegie Trust on the challenge for libraries:

“The challenge which public libraries face is to continue to be the kind of places which Andrew Carnegie wanted when he funded libraries:

- *places that give people a chance, a second chance and even a third chance*
- *places that improve the communities they are based in*
- *places that respond to the needs of local people, giving them the opportunity to live fuller lives, make more of what they have, discover new worlds and aspire to greater things”*

Speaking Volumes, Carnegie UK Trust

- 9.7. Throughout the Engagement and Consultation, respondents have raised questions about the future of the Central Library Building and the proposals for the future of the Central Library Building are covered in Section 10.
- 9.8. Across the country, library usage is falling, and Central Library has not been immune to this trend. From 2012 to 2019 visitors to Central Library have shown a year on year decline from over 200,000 visitors in 2012-13 to 116,097 in 2019/20. The chart below demonstrates a 42% fall in visitor numbers that Central Library has experienced since 2012.



9.9. If a Central Library Service is to remain used by residents and reverse the trend of falling use of recent years, it needs to cater for the needs of not only the existing users but also be attractive to current non-users and future users.

9.10. The funding that is provided by FHSF cannot be used to provide an enhanced offer in Central Library Building. Any improvements undertaken to the library service in the existing building would need to be funded from Council resources and the costs of doing this have previously been reported at £5.5m and will generate no income. Even then the scale of the offer would be limited by the fact that the usable space Central Library Building is approximately 30% of that in the main Stockroom facility (excluding Adlington Walk and Merseyway Innovation Centre).

9.11. The demands that the library service and partner organisations place on a building have changed over the years. The space has been altered and adapted to address changing patterns of library usage as well as to ensure reasonable adaptations were made for people with a disability.

9.12. However, there are some facilities that are difficult to accommodate in the building without significant capital expenditure. These include required upgrades to the archival storage facilities in the basement of the building in order to protect the borough's archives for the future, as well as inclusive facilities such as Changing Place toilets; private parent and baby/breastfeeding space; and enlarged public lifts to accommodate all sizes of mobility scooters.

9.13. There are also the benefits to Merseyway and the wider Town Centre which come from the Stockroom proposal and the integration of library services into this.

9.14. Retail in town centres across the whole country has a greater supply of premises than a demand from occupiers and repurposing this oversupply is key to keeping

town centres vibrant and active. Stockport is already on this journey with the conversion of the former Marks and Spencer's unit by Glenbrook to new employment space in the heart of Merseyway.

- 9.15. The FHSF bid was praised for its high scoring against the fund criteria and its approach to the repurposing of former retail space. Stockroom will bring back into use 8 units in Adlington Walk which were difficult to let even in a buoyant market.
- 9.16. The long term sustainability that this will create in the Town Centre coupled with the extensive regeneration programme will not only generate greater use of the town centre but will help existing and new retailers by creating more footfall and help protect the value of the Council's investment in Merseyway. The Council's strategy for Merseyway has always been about ensuring it was busy and vibrant and we believe Stockroom will provide such an impact
- 9.17. The funding also allows the creation of new shared workspace through the Merseyway Innovation Centre, again in surplus first floor retail space, which will provide high quality workspace for micro and small businesses in the heart of the Town Centre creating new employment opportunities and bringing new visitors to Merseyway on a daily basis.
- 9.18. The social and economic benefits of cultural led regeneration' projects like Stockroom have been shown to be broad and long lasting. Research by 'Hatch Regeneris' commissioned by the Local Government Association has demonstrated that culture-led regeneration can deliver a range of social and economic impacts, including:
 - Creating Employment
 - Enhancing community cohesion and pride
 - Attracting more visitors,
 - Boosting the tourism sector
 - Supporting enhanced resident health
 - Stimulating town centre footfall, boosting local business
 - Bringing enjoyment for residents
 - Stimulating and supporting creative sector growth
 - Attracting inward investment
 - Developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of residents
 - Enhancing the area's image, helping to attract skilled people and business investment

The report was published by LGA 2021 and is available here - [Culture-led regeneration: achieving inclusive and sustainable growth \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

- 9.19. In addition, Stockroom has the potential in the future to act as a catalyst to bring in additional income into the town through bids to the Arts Council and other external funding bodies.

10. CENTRAL LIBRARY BUILDING

- 10.1. As highlighted above, the Central Library Building is cherished by the residents of Stockport and one of the biggest concerns coming out of the engagement and consultation process was the lack of detail around the future plans for the building if the library service was relocated to Stockroom.
- 10.2. In July 2021 the Council made the following commitments regarding the future of the Central Library Building ensuring that public access is retained to the building for the long-term, so future generations can appreciate this heritage treasure:
- The Central Library building will not be demolished or abandoned.
 - The Council will not sell the freehold of the Central Library building
 - The Council will not redevelop the Central Library building for flats or any residential use that would mean the public losing access to this heritage asset
- 10.3. The Cabinet report in June 2021 set out the initial draft work that CBRE had undertaken for the Council on potential future uses for the Central Library Building and this is set out in detail in Appendix 5.
- 10.4. The report considers five potential uses which comply with the commitments given in 10.2 which are as follows:
- Relocation of the Adult Education Service from Hardman Street
 - Provision of a new primary healthcare facility for the town centre
 - Provision of a new community enterprise space in the town centre
 - Provision of a co-working/shared workspace
 - Relocation of the Coroner's Court from Mount Tabor
- 10.5. The Adult Education Centre is located in Hardman Street and is also looking for extended space to expand its offer. There is already an element of capital cost which has been allocated for an expansion into Park View and this could be utilised to help fund the capital costs of a relocation. It would also free up the buildings in Town Centre West and these could also generate a capital receipt to help support the costs. In addition it would provide a town centre rather than a fringe of town centre location for learners.
- 10.6. This use is most aligned to the principles from the Carnegie Trust in terms of using the building to help give people those chances to improve their lives and is the Council's preferred use. However there is more work to do to set out a business case for this use.
- 10.7. The Coroner's Court has identified a requirement for a larger premises than its existing location and the Central Library Building would provide space in which this could be achieved. It would also release the building at Mount Tabor which is in Council ownership to generate a capital receipt to help fund the capital costs of a move. It would also keep the service in the town centre.

- 10.8. It should also be noted that some of the uses set out in 10.4 could possible use the space together and more analysis will be done on this in the next phase of work.
- 10.9. All of the uses above would generate a revenue stream in terms of rent and the next stage of this would will be to establish what we are likely to achieve. High level but untested estimates would suggest that this would be able to fund the fit-out costs for these uses and some uses would be able to contribute to the various works which are needed to the services and fabric of the building.
- 10.10. The uses in question have a broad cost range of £3m to £4m, predominantly dependant on the level of fit-out required for the building with a significant cost in all solutions being the existing condition of the building and remedying the defects which have been identified which have previously been reported as being in the region of £2m. It is proposed that these capital costs will be part funded by capital receipts from surplus property and/or a rent receivable.
- 10.11. More work is required to explore the detail of the business cases for the uses set out in 10.4 above and it is proposed that additional survey work, more detailed work on the cost of fit-out and the final assessment for each use are undertaken as the next phases of work, together with engagement with potential occupiers for the five scenarios in 10.2,
- 10.12. It should be noted that if the library service is removed from the building it will be at least 18-21 months before vacant possession could be achieved and the earliest that the building could be brought back into use following a fit-out for one of the uses is likely to be early 2024.
- 10.13. Having listened to what people have told us about the continued access to the Central Library Building, any occupation arrangements with future occupiers will ensure that there will be regular public access to the building and it is proposed that the Council work with its heritage partners to deliver this. The exact details of this will need to be finalised once the use of the building has been determined.
- 10.14. It is proposed that this work takes place over the next six months and a further report is brought back to Cabinet in Summer 2022 before the final decision on the future use of the building.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The detail that follows demonstrates how the Council could bring together current structural costs being incurred together with potential savings and additional income to finance the operational aspects of Stockroom. This approach has the potential to offer more services, for longer opening hours within the same or reduced financial envelope as well as leveraging in significant government capital grant support. The receipt of government capital grant from the FHSF would enable significant investment to be made into Merseyway reducing the need for the use of Council resources. This investment together with the proposals outlined to drive footfall in the Town Centre is in line and contributes positively to our ambitions for our town centre and our communities and will strengthen the value of the town centre assets owned by the Council.

11.2. The FHSF award is subject to monitoring and evaluation and the terms of the grant funding are contained within a 'Memorandum of Understanding' from MHCLG. Additional costs will be incurred by the Council as a result of the development of Stockroom that will sit outside of the funding provided by FHSF. These costs are likely to include;

- Marketing, branding and PR costs associated with the launch of Stockroom
- Relocation costs of services accommodated into Stockroom
- Digitisation of resources (Library, Museum and Heritage archives)
- Cost of consultancy advice on the curation of the Stockroom Cultural offer
- New equipment and ICT upgrades

The digitisation of resources and the ICT new equipment/upgrades are investments that the Council are likely to have to undertake over the course of the next few years in any event.

11.3. Work to quantify and mitigate these costs is ongoing. However, the Council previously had up to £4m of reserves set aside for Merseyway. The funding from FHSF has enabled a significant reduction in this with the reserves being redeployed to support the Councils MTFP and response to Covid. The commitments to the MTFP and Covid response have been made and should the FHSF not progress the Council would be at risk of needing to identify significant funds to fill the gap or risk not investing in Merseyway

11.4. A full Business Plan will be developed for Stockroom, this will consider in much more detail the operational costs and various income streams for Stockroom and how these could be optimised to support and off-set the occupying cost of Stockroom. Authority to approve a final operational business plan for Stockroom will be sought under the delegated authority set out in the recommendations below.

11.5. The current operational and occupancy costs to the Council related to buildings relevant to this report are detailed below.

11.5.1. Central Library / One Stockport Hub

The Council currently have occupational costs related to Central Library and One Stockport Hub. In line with the recommendations made in this report, both Central Library and One Stockport Hub would relocate to Stockroom when it opens in Summer 2023. Currently it is anticipated that annual running costs for Central Library are IRO £120,000 per annum. Running costs for One Stockport Hub are funded through to April 2023. Once Stockroom opens it is anticipated that the unit currently occupied by One Stockport Hub would return to commercial use and generate an income of in the region of £30,000 pa

11.5.2. Cheadle Museum Stores. Museum and Archive store

This is located in a bespoke storage facility with no access for the public possible. The occupancy costs for this space are IRO of £60,000 per annum. Stockroom will feature customer-facing space for Museum and Heritage Library

storage and archiving. This will allow a termination of the occupational arrangements at the Cheadle store and a relocation of the collection. This will enable previously identified savings to be realised but will not be off-set against future occupancy costs.

11.5.3. The Apprenticeship Store/Careers Advice at Central House

These are currently occupied under a lease. It is proposed that the services currently offered from this site would be included within Stockroom. The occupational costs associated with the current unit is IRO £65,000.00 per annum.

11.5.4. Adlington Walk - Empty Property Costs

Adlington Walk currently has eight vacant units. Many of these have been vacant for a considerable length of time, are not in prime retailing locations, are of sizes where there is a limited retail market and there are significant void liabilities on these units of £586,944.32 per annum to the Council whilst they are vacant. These are difficult to relet given some of the national issues regarding the structural change of the retail sector. The value of bringing these units back into use for Stockroom also comes from the ability to grow rents across the wider Merseyway scheme by increased footfall.

11.5.5. It is anticipated the above occupancy costs would be saved from the date that services relocate into Stockroom. A summary table below show the overall occupancy costs related to the properties referenced above.

Name	Annual costs
Central Library	£120,000
Apprenticeship Store / Central House	£65,000
Void costs (Adlington Walk)	£587,000
Total	£772,000

11.6. Stockroom Occupancy costs

11.6.1. Stockroom would pay a peppercorn rent for the space as set out in the original submission to FHSF. This also reflects the letting potential of the majority of the space.

11.6.2. Stockroom will be liable to pay Service Charge as part of the Merseyway Shopping Centre. This is calculated on a square foot basis and is applicable to all businesses in Merseyway. The likely annual cost of the Service Charge will be £170,000. The service charge pays for the upkeep of communal areas in and services from the Centre Management Team.

11.6.3. Stockroom will be liable for NNDR. CBRE have reviewed the NNDR position for Stockroom and have estimated that the Business Rates liability for the development will be IRO £300,000. The advice received from the Council's Business rates team is that given the lack of a comparison to Stockroom in the borough, it would be advisable to approach the VO with confirmed floor spaces

and uses to discuss how the development would be treated. However there is an anticipated improvement on this figure by way of a reduced rates liability.

11.6.4. Stockroom will be liable for utility costs. Currently these are anticipated to be IRO £45,000pa.

11.6.5. Where possible, tenders for sub-contracted items will request inclusion of service agreements within the initial capital outlay. Whilst maintenance liabilities will be kept to a minimum, it is likely that annual service contracts will be required for a number of items. The cost of these is yet to be agreed. However a planned and reactive maintenance budget will need to be factored into the running costs for Stockroom. The current maintenance budget at Central Library is £26,000 per annum and it is anticipated that this will be a similar figure for Stockroom.

11.6.6. The Facilities Management (FM) for Stockroom will be provided by SMBC Estates through Robertsons. The cost of this is anticipated to be IRO £200,000 per annum.

11.6.7. A summary of the likely occupancy costs for Stockroom is set out in the table below.

Item	Annual cost
Rent	n/a
Service Charge	£170,000
Business rates	£300,000 (maximum)
Building maintenance and management	£200,000
Stockroom Manager	£75,000
Maintenance contracts	£26,000
Other	£25,000
Total	£ 796,000

11.6.8. Staffing costs are expected to be in the region of £400,000 (including on-costs) based on current salary scales. This will be met through core budgets and predominantly achieved by bringing together colleagues from a number of teams to form a core Stockroom team of 11.5fte (full time equivalents). Whilst changes to some job roles may be required there is an expectation that a neutral position will be achieved in relation to FTE. To ensure that Stockroom achieves its full potential it is proposed to appoint a Stockroom Manager to lead the core team. The costs of this post is accounted for and this is likely to add a further £75,000 pa (including on-costs) which is included in the above table.

11.7 It is anticipated that Stockroom will have a number of potential income streams. Whilst these are difficult to quantify at present, further work will be done to maximise potential income to off-set against occupancy costs. These potential income streams will include but are not limited to;

11.7.1. Café / catering opportunities

Soft Market Testing is being done through the Council's agents to understand the potential operating model and value of the café and associated kitchen.

11.7.2. Event space / Community and other hire

Stockroom features flexible space for events and community hire. Whilst it is not intended that significant income would be derived from the community hire space, the large event space on the first floor offers the opportunity for a more substantial income stream. Work has been done to determine potential demand for the event and community space and to consider how the space would compare with competing spaces in the town centre.

11.7.3. One of the successful elements of One Stockport Hub has been the Museum shop. This has acted as a draw to bring people into the space and has seen an increase in takings since opening. It is proposed that an area of Stockroom is set aside for a retail opportunity in line with the offer at One Stockport Hub.

11.7.4. The inclusion in Stockroom of a bespoke storage area for the archives from the Museum and Heritage library collections offers the opportunity to offer tours and special interest talks on artefacts within the collection. This is in line with National Archive ambitions to broaden access to heritage collections and would present an opportunity to develop a new income stream.

11.7.5. It is anticipated the Stockroom will be used by school parties as part of the wider educational offer existing in the Town Centre. This offer includes the Air Raid Shelters which are adjacent to the Stockroom site, and the classroom, performance space, and community space would be available for school parties throughout the week during term time.

11.7.6. A summary of the potential income streams for Stockroom is included in the table below.

Potential income stream	Income per annum
Café	£26,000
Events	£35,000
Community hire	£9,600
Retail opportunities	£24,000
Museum Tours and Talks	£5,000
School parties / SEN hire	£30,000
Sundry items	£5,000
Rent (sub-letting space in Stockroom)	£7,800
Rent – One Stockport Hub	£30,000
Total	£ 172,400

11.8 Whilst a number of the assumptions above are yet to be confirmed and verified, with the final make up of the services moving into Stockroom yet to be agreed, the tables above illustrate the potential for the operation of Stockroom to be self financing.

11.9 A full Business Plan will be developed for Stockroom which will consider in much more detail the operational costs and various income streams for Stockroom and how these could be optimised to support and off-set the

occupying cost of Stockroom. Authority to approve a final operational business plan for Stockroom will be sought under the delegated authority set out in the recommendations below.

12. RISKS

- 12.1. Financial risks around the capital build budget for the project will be addressed through a robust design and cost management process.
- 12.2. The award of £14.5m from the Fund was the result of a competitive bidding process with a number of other town centres. The final proposal needs to be consistent with the Business Case which was put forward in June 2020 and was assessed against HM Treasury Green Book appraisal methodologies and criteria and also against the objectives of the FHSF as set out above in section 3. Any significant departure from the approved submission is likely to jeopardise the funding of all elements of the scheme.
- 12.3. Risks exist around the business model, particularly in terms of potential income streams to support the occupational costs of Stockroom. Initial work is underway to mitigate these risks by understanding the likely market for both the café and for event space hire. This work will be finalised prior to requesting approval for the final business plan for Stockroom under the delegated authority sought in this report. A conservative approach has been taken to estimating the potential income streams in 10.6.9 above.
- 12.4. Risks around the public getting behind Stockroom and turning that support into footfall and ultimately users of the new development will be key to manage in the coming eighteen months, prior to Stockroom opening in Summer 2023. The recent engagement and consultation give some indication that Stockroom is likely to attract new users to the services housed within. Further details of those people who said they were likely to use Stockroom are included within appendix 2. There are examples across the country, where libraries have been re-imagined and cultural and learning spaces have been located in the heart of the High Street. Where this has happened, more people have visited and benefitted from those spaces and the national trend of decline in library usage has been reversed.
- 12.5. Over the next eighteen months a PR and marketing campaign will run, raising awareness of Stockroom and encouraging people to help decide how Stockroom can be relevant to them. This will involve talking with people about the vision and values for this brand new facility and involving local people in choosing some of the final finishes and furniture for Stockroom.

13. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 13.1. A Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the FSHF has been entered into between the Council and MHCLG (now DLUHC) in accordance with grant award criteria. There will be requirements to ensure that FHSF spend is eligible, is spent within the grant availability period and that monitoring and evaluation obligations are fulfilled.

- 13.2. There are no Subsidy Control (formerly State Aid) implications associated with accepting the FHSF grant as all expenditure is directed towards a publicly owned asset.
- 13.3. The Council have taken legal advice to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and best practice in its consultation on the proposed relocation of the library service. This advice is legally privileged and the reference to the existence of such advice in this report is not a waiver of that privilege.
- 13.4. The appointment of the main contractor (John Graham Construction Limited) for the refurbishment has been undertaken through a construction framework, through which the Council took proposals to market for the Adlington Walk refurbishment and further pipeline projects within the Town Centre subject to availability of funding.
- 13.5. The finalisation of contractual documents with John Graham will need to be consistent with the opportunity advertised to the market and awarded through the framework to minimise procurement risk.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 14.1. It is envisaged that colleagues from a number of teams will be brought together to form a core Stockroom team. This may require some changes in job roles, including the requirement for Sunday working in order to mirror the Merseyway shopping hours.
- 14.2. Any changes to roles or teams will be carried out under the council's reorganisation policy and procedures, and would include staff and union consultation as part of this process.
- 14.3. Whilst changes to some job roles may be required there is an expectation of a neutral position in relation to full time equivalent roles when compared to current staffing.

15. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 15.1. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are used by the Council as an equality monitoring tool to ensure and demonstrate that our proposals comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to protect individuals from unfair treatment and to promote a fairer and more equal society.
- 15.2. There are nine protected characteristics defined by law. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation. The full EqIA can be viewed in appendix 4 and shows how we have considered any equality related impacts.
- 15.3. Whilst there is notable strength of feeling about the Central Library as heritage building, to date there have been few negative impacts identified in relation to the Stockroom proposal, and no negative impacts of moving the library service from the Central Library building that are relevant to equality. Some groups of people with protected characteristics were more likely to disagree with the proposals, such as disabled people and over 65s, but the reasons for this were largely based on affection

for the Central Library building rather than on issues such as accessibility or discrimination. However, any emerging negative impacts will continue to be explored and reviewed.

15.4. Whilst the consultation revealed that in general, older people and those with a disability or long-term health condition disagreed with the proposal to move Central Library services to Stockroom, it was widely acknowledged that the proposals for Stockroom would be likely to make library services more accessible. This would be to people with a disability and other groups such as families with young children, people from ethnically diverse communities and LGBTQ+ people. The opportunity to widen participation from under-represented groups that comes with modernising a service and offering wider-ranging facilities that would not be possible in the Central Library building should be given weight when considering the proposals.

16. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

16.1. This project reflects the priorities of the Council's Climate Action Now strategy and seeks to ensure that the refurbishment of an existing public asset is done in such a way to maximise carbon efficiency and where possible deliver against our carbon reduction commitments.

16.2. The proposed scheme involves the re-use of a number of existing buildings bringing largely vacant retail space back into public use. This avoids the need for demolition and minimises the impact of embodied carbon. The proposed refurbishment of the building would involve new more efficient building services and we would look to optimise these elements as the scheme costs will allow.

16.3. As well as the social and economic benefits that will be gained through the construction of Stockroom, the building will have a number of features to minimise its environmental impact. These include;

- Variable Air Volume (Cooling) – This will control the flow of air into the building rather than the temperature of air which provides a better ventilated and more efficient space.
- Air Source Heat Pump (heating)
- LED fittings throughout
- A Building Management System that will enable smart use of building and efficient use of heating, cooling, lighting and security for the building
- Throughout, Stockroom will use materials with low embodied carbon and recycled materials where possible.

16.4. The proposed location of Stockroom would allow access to all residents and its close proximity to public transport means it can be visited using sustainable modes of transport. This will be enhanced by the forthcoming construction of the Interchange scheme.

17. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1. The Cabinet are requested to:

- 17.1.1. Note the update on progress with Stockport's Future High Street Fund project, Stockroom and approve the proposals
- 17.1.2. Note the recent consultation undertaken and approve the relocation the town centre library offer from Central Library Building into Stockroom.
- 17.1.3. Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services) in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus & Engagement, the Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance and the Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration:
 - (a) to appoint a contractor to deliver the refurbishment works and execute any necessary letter of intent or other agreement, pending resolution of the final contract, to maintain progress in connection with the redevelopment of Stockroom;
 - (b) to take all necessary steps to implement the strategy set out in this report;
 - (c) to approve the final Operational Business Plan for Stockroom.
- 17.1.4. Delegate authority to the Strategic Head of Service (Legal & Democratic Governance) to do all things necessary or incidental to the implementation of the resolutions at 17.1.3.
- 17.1.5. Note the update provided on the potential future uses of the existing Central Library Building and approve the proposed course of action set out in Section 10 to progress these.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Stockroom Design Pack

Appendix 2 – QA Research – Stockport Central Library Consultation 2021

Appendix 3 – Online Survey materials

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment – October 2021

Appendix 5 – CBRE – Central Library Building – New Uses Options Report