

COMMITTEE: GRAMPIAN JOINT POLICE BOARD

DATE: 8 JUNE 2012

TITLE OF REPORT: PROPOSED NEW ABERDEEN CUSTODY SUITE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Members of the Grampian Joint Police Board on progress made and the current position in relation to this project.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 To note the contents of this report and give final agreement to lodge a planning application based on an agreed design and having regard to the Predicted Maximum Price.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Predicted Maximum Price (PMP) for this development, as received from North Territory Hub Co is £11.89m. When other costs are taken into consideration the total cost breakdown is as follows;

Predicted Maximum Price	; £ 11,890,000
Site purchase	; £ 1,700,000
Estimated IT / communications costs	; £ 400,000
Estimated TOTAL	; £ 13,990,000

Of this figure, £50,000 has already been paid, leaving a balance of £13.94 million.

- 3.2 The Capital funding of this and other property projects are considered in more financial detail in the separate following paper on Financing the Capital Budget.
- 3.3 There will be revenue costs associated with running this new facility, which will be offset by savings associated in removing the abstraction time for opening overspill facilities for custodies who cannot be accommodated within the existing Queen Street facilities. There will also be additional savings in relation to future estate opportunities, notably giving up the lease on the King Street building currently primarily occupied by Criminal Justice, Operational Planning and IT Departments. This building currently costs approximately £500,000 per annum in leasing costs.

4. SERVICE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 4.1 The new-build will significantly reduce the current level of risk accepted by the Force in terms of both the current facility and the transportation of custodies. Appropriate resources can then be redirected to support the weekend operational response and then critically reduce the impact on Local Policing Teams.
- 4.2 The provision of a base for the Kittybrewster Local Policing Team (LPT) within the LPT area is seen as a significant benefit by local residents and supports the Force Community Focus objective in addition to following the "Local Policing Closer to You" theme of recent years.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As highlighted in the Force's Property Asset Management Plan (PAMP), Queen Street has been well maintained and has had certain areas upgraded and refurbished in recent years. However, the property is now 40 years old and has a relatively large proportion of ancillary circulation space. The building accounts for a significant percentage of the running costs of the entire estate (21%) and 29% of the Force's carbon footprint. A significant proportion of the building relates to custody and if a new custody facility is built away off site, it will be an opportune time at that point, to consider the future use of the building. In particular, opportunities can be explored for Criminal Justice partners such as the Scottish Courts Service, Scottish Prison Service and G4S to make use of the existing cells at Queen Street.

6. REPORT

- 6.1 Members may recall that Grampian Police initiated a Custody Project as long ago as 2004 based on concerns that the existing Queen Street facility was neither able to meet demand for capacity nor modern Health and Safety requirements. A report produced by Dr Craig Anderson in 2006 made a number of recommendations for Force custody provision, including the replacement of the Aberdeen facility.
- 6.2 A programme of work has been undertaken to upgrade the Queen Street custody facility in order to maintain its operational safety including replacement of cell doors, installation of a fire escape and a variety of smaller works including the installation of some CCTV coverage. Other works have been undertaken elsewhere in the custody estate, including the installation of 10 temporary cells at Fraserburgh to meet the current custody needs for the Buchan Area with a view to replacing the Peterhead Police Office (including a new custody suite) at some point in the future.
- 6.3 Some issues with the existing estate cannot be resolved by means of modification. For example there is insufficient space to increase the capacity of the Queen Street cell block. Also, the existing block extends to 3 floors, a design which contravenes Home Office guidance, which states that custody facilities should be located on a single level. In recent years this has become a matter of increasing concern to the Force and resulted in an entry being made in the Force's significant Risk Register. There are only 2 major mitigated risks in that register, both of them relating to custody facilities, one in Aberdeen and the other in Peterhead. This continues to be a matter of considerable concern to the Force.

- 6.4 The Force has continuously attempted to identify sites for new facilities both in Aberdeen and Peterhead and had, until recently, been unable to identify a site which was both suitable and affordable. A number of sites have been examined and rejected.
- 6.5 Members will recall that Grampian Joint Police Board, at its meetings on 20 January 2012 and 23 March 2012, were advised that Scottish Water had accepted an offer for the identified site at Kittybrewster and the legal paperwork in relation to the site acquisition had been agreed (the offer of £1.7 million is subject to Grampian Police obtaining a satisfactory planning consent for a custody development on the site). The force is utilising the North Territory Hub Co, for the procurement of the design team and contractor for the build.
- 6.6 Progress is being governed by a Custody Project Board chaired by the now T/Deputy Chief Constable Colin Menzies, with relevant stakeholders including a local Councillor and the Convenor of the Grampian Joint Police Board. Progress and decisions are reported to the Force Executive Board for approval. The design process timeline, although aggressive, is successfully meeting planning deadlines.
- 6.7 Detailed consideration has been given by the Project Board to the capacity of the facility taking account of the following;
- In the period 01/01/2009 to 31/12/2011 existing cell capacity at Queen Street (31 cells) was exceeded on 42.6% of occasions (467 days from a total of 1095 days).
 - The "overspill" resulting from this position causes a number of outlying and infrequently used facilities to be opened and staffed to accommodate the additional custodies. This increases the risk to the organisation in a number of ways. Transporting custodies provides risks in itself and staffing the custody facilities with Police Officers whose full time role is not custody care brings further risk. Officers abstracted to perform this role are drawn from Local Policing Teams which reduces visibility in our communities. The minimum financial cost of this requirement is c.£250,000 p.annum.
 - Custody throughput, which for many years was rising steeply has seen a slowing down of the rate of increase in more recent years and for the first time in 2011 saw a modest decline of 2.65%. It is too early to determine if this is the start of a trend.
 - The implications arising from Lord Carlways Review of Summary Justice in Scotland are an important consideration with regard to the number of people taken into custody by Police. At this stage, it is difficult to predict with accuracy the full impact but it is believed, based on experience of implementing similar proposals in other parts of the UK, that while the number of people detained for prolonged periods in police custody to appear in court may decline, it is likely that the overall number of suspects and arrested persons taken into police custody on a temporary basis (throughput) will increase.
 - A priority for the Custody Project Board is to reduce the risk associated with transferring prisoners between facilities and number of staff abstractions associated with opening additional custody facilities to cope with "overspill". The Project Board were asked to determine the optimum capacity for the new facility.
 - Each cell costs in the region of £50,000 to construct, so there is a clear need to balance the need for increased capacity against the effective use of resources.

- A detailed examination of the last 3 years' custody data reveals that constructing a 50 cell facility would still result in the facility being "over capacity" on 5% of occasions, leading to a continuation of the existing issues, albeit on a reduced scale. Constructing 55 cells would result in the facility being over capacity on 1.6% of occasions and 60 cells on 0.5% of occasions. 65 cells would reduce this figure to 0.1% and 70 to 0%.
 - Based on this information, the Custody Project Board recommended a building capacity of 60 cells.
- 6.8 Various construction methods have been considered, including modular metal-framed construction, of the type used in the temporary cells at Fraserburgh, a more robust pre-cast concrete modular construction method of a type used at a recently constructed facility in North Tyneside and a traditional type of cement and block construction. The modular pre-cast concrete option was selected as the favoured approach as it provides the benefits of greatest quality control (units produced in a factory environment), very robust construction leading to greater longevity and a short construction time on site which is least susceptible to delays caused by poor weather conditions.
- 6.9 The vision of Grampian Police and the Custody Project Board is to provide a facility that is capable of supporting innovative, more efficient ways of delivering criminal justice services with relevant partners. It is essential, for example, that healthcare for people in custody is delivered in conjunction with the NHS and discussions are ongoing to determine the most appropriate model for that partnership. It is emphasised however, that NHS Grampian are committed to providing an NHS staffing element in the building. It is also important that custodies with drug and alcohol issues are given appropriate support and advice and that public sector partners such as the Scottish Courts Service and Procurator Fiscal Service work together in the most efficient manner possible. For these reasons, the facility takes a forward-looking approach to joint working.
- 6.10 The command team and local residents are keen to see the Kittybrewster Local Policing Team (LPT) located in the area they serve, and Project Board members felt the opportunity to incorporate the LPT office into the building should not be missed.
- 6.11 The Criminal Justice system of which the custody facility is small part, is supported by a variety of Police administrative roles including Police Reports, Criminal Records etc. Similar roles form part of the Prosecution and Court processes and the Project Board strongly believe that the future will see even closer working between Criminal Justice agencies. On that basis, the Board agreed to design a building that is capable of supporting such joint working and which seeks to anticipate the further opportunities presented by the ongoing Police Reform process.
- 6.12 The Police Criminal Justice Department is currently accommodated, along with other staff, within a leased building located on King Street, Aberdeen. Moving these staff to the new Kittybrewster facility will bring increased efficiencies and together with an estate rationalisation plan which would see the re-location of the remaining staff from the King Street premises would result in the Force giving up the lease to that building when it comes for renewal in 2014. This would save the Force approximately £500,000 per year in revenue costs.

- 6.13 Recent changes to Scottish Law have seen a substantial increase in access by suspects to Solicitor advice. Taking account of this has resulted in the provision of 8 dedicated solicitor access rooms.
- 6.14 Future changes to the Criminal Justice system are likely to see the increased use of Police Bail and substantial numbers of suspects returning for further interview having initially been released from custody pending further enquiry. This mirrors the situation in England and a "Bail Reporting Area" based on the English model has also been incorporated.
- 6.15 While constructing a cell block and immediate administrative support only would be less expensive, it would fail to deliver many of the business benefits outlined above. It must also be noted that only 3% of the floor area of the building comprises specific partner or shared accommodation, so removing this accommodation from the design specification would only marginally reduce the overall cost. Such a move would however, dramatically reduce the opportunities for future partnership collaboration and in the meantime, effective use can be made of such accommodation by existing Grampian Police staff. In addition to the size issues referred to above, certain constraints such as the shape and topography of the site and some degree of soil contamination have all combined to result in costs as detailed in the financial section above.
- 6.16 It is important to note that in spite of the robust construction techniques selected and the innovative approach taken to the design, which seeks to achieve a BREEAM rating (a building standard which provides a measure of how "green" a building is) of "very good", the cost per square metre of the facility has remained constant throughout the project. Achieving a higher BREEAM rating of "excellent" was originally an aspiration of the Project Board, but such a rating is very difficult to achieve in a building which has limited opportunities for using natural daylight, recycled rainwater etc and in the view of the Project Board, to seek to do so would have been prohibitively expensive and unachievable.
- 6.17 The cost figures provided represent a Predicted Maximum Price and are expected to realise a lower actual figure once the process of competitive tendering for individual components has been undertaken. This occurs at the stages following the grant of Planning Permission.
- 6.18 Some opportunities to reduce the overall project cost still exist including reducing the specification of detailed components, but care must be taken in this regard to ensure that it does not impact on resilience of the components which might increase the lifecycle running costs of the building. Such cost reductions are likely to be fairly modest as care has been taken to ensure appropriate specification and a "value engineering" exercise have already taken place.
- 6.19 The Project Board do not consider that any reduction in the scale of the facility is feasible. The floor areas of the design are 3,220 m² for the custody suite and 1,430 m² for the supporting office space. Reducing cell capacity to below 60 would result in a continuation of the existing issues around the accommodation of "overspilling" custodies and all the associated risks. Reducing the capacity of the office accommodation would eliminate the option to give up the lease of the King Street building which would in turn hinder the Force's ability to meet the objectives of National Estate Strategy – ie reduce revenue spend on buildings which are not Police-owned.

- 6.20 The project has been considered in light of the Police Reform process and it is envisaged that the area covered by the existing Grampian Police Force will always require three primary custodial facilities based at Aberdeen, Elgin and Fraserburgh/Peterhead. At a Scottish level, it is anticipated that the rationalisation of Primary Custodial facilities will largely impact in the central belt area where the most efficiencies offered by sharing facilities are to be made. This is due to the removal of Force boundaries and close proximity of such facilities.
- 6.21 A public consultation exercise has been conducted, with over 50 people attending. Most were very positive about the facility, with the inclusion of the Local Policing Team office being seen as particularly positive. Further smaller consultations with groups such as the Woodside Neighbourhood Network and the Kittybrewster Primary School Parent's Council have also been held.
- 6.22 In terms of operation, a decision has yet to be taken as to whether the facility will be operated by staff employed by the Police Service of Scotland or whether the operation will be outsourced to the private sector where a number of companies currently specialise in running such facilities in the rest of the UK. This decision is also likely to be influenced by discussions taking place in the National Reform arena.
- 6.23 Staffing will require to be particularly flexible as the nature of the facility is such that use will be much lower during weekdays than at weekends. Weekday custody numbers are in the region of 25 – 30, meaning staffing levels are likely to continue at similar levels to those that currently exist. The building is designed to enable individual corridors to be shut down at times of low demand, resulting in savings to running costs. At peak times, staff numbers will need to be higher than at present and work is ongoing to determine the most appropriate staffing model. It is anticipated that the facility will be operating at very close to capacity during many weekends.
- 6.24 Subject to members approval, the next steps will be;
- June 2102 - Submit the plans for Planning Permission. This should take place very shortly after the June meeting of the Grampian Joint Police Board in order to continue to follow the challenging programme time line.
 - August 2012 - The Project Team are targeting the Aberdeen City Council Development Management Sub-Committee meeting on 23 August as the meeting at which the application for Planning Permission will be considered.
 - September 2012 - If Planning Permission is granted, this will enable demolition work to take place during September 2012.
 - October / November 2012 - Construction to begin and continue for a 52 week building programme.
 - November 2013 – Construction completed.
 - November / December 2013 – Commissioning.
 - December 2013 – Facility becomes operational.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

Chief Constable
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