

POLICY, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES

PARKSIDE RECEPTION IMPROVEMENTS - ACOUSTICS

1.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit a request for approval of this Committee to some acoustic improvements to Parkside Reception at a cost of up to £11,000. and to approve a capital sum of up to £11,000 to be funded from the Council's reserves and balances.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Members approve the project mandate attached at Appendix B for inclusion in the 2013/14 capital programme.**
- 2.2 **That Members indicate their preferred option from the three options outlined in 3.1 of the report and, subject to funding being approved by full Council at the budget setting meeting on 6th February 2013, a business case will be submitted to this committee at a later meeting for approval.**

3.0 OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE RECEPTION ACOUSTICS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 Since opening Parkside the acoustics of the reception area has caused problems of intrusive break out noise. This is due to the large and open design of reception / atrium from ground floor to the second floor. Reverberating sound travels from reception on the hard reflective surfaces into the upper office floors and also from the first floor into reception, meaning that conversations on the first floor can on occasion be overheard in reception. This inadvertent overhearing of conversations could result in reputational damage or other issues arising.

Officers commissioned a report on acoustic noise levels at Parkside and the conclusion for the reception area was that the atrium /reception area suffers from high levels of intrusive noise. This resulted in recommendations for stifling the noise and addressing the problem. Sound Control Services are a local specialist company and have offered the following solutions:

Option 1 - Acoustic rectangular ceiling raft panels. These comprise sound deadening material hanging from the second floor ceiling, the panels act as a sound barrier and sound absorber, and they will be situated at staggered heights.

Estimated cost: £10,300 to supply and fit

Option 2 - Hanging geometrically shaped acoustic panels; these are similar to the above, with a variety of shapes as shown at Appendix A (Option 2).

Estimated cost: £10,300 to supply and fit

Option 3 – Hanging cubes of sound deadening material. These hang from the structural ceiling on the top floor or horizontally across the atrium and are arranged to again break up the sound paths.

Estimated cost: £10,600 to supply and fit

All of the above options are available in a variety of colours and textures. The selected baffles will be hung at first floor level only. Members may consider it appropriate to consult Blue Print Interiors to advise on a colour scheme for the preferred option.

Images for each option can be seen at Appendix A.

6.0 POLICY & CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council wants the building to operate effectively for all partners and to be fit for purpose. The proposed improvements will help improve the environment and effectiveness of Parkside. Officers will invite a minimum of three companies to submit quotations for the preferred solution in accordance with Council procurement regulations and to ensure that pricing is competitive.

7.0 FINANCIAL & OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The project will be included in the capital programme items for members to consider and prioritise when budgets are set at Full Council meeting on the 6th February 2013.

7.2 The financial implications will vary according to which option is preferred by Members. There will be additional revenue implications associated with cleaning and maintenance; however these will be relatively low and estimated to cost less than £200 per annum.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

8.1 There is noise at work regulations although this matter does not constitute excessive noise at work. However, preventing or reducing the travel of sound from reception to other parts of the building will help to prevent the risk of conversations being overheard inadvertently and also reduce noise disturbance in the customer and office environment.

9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

9.1 Confidentiality for customers is important and these sound insulation improvements will address the issue of sound spreading from the reception to other parts of the building. Fire inspectors have been consulted on the proposals and how they might impact on the operation of the smoke vents in the case of a fire, confirmation was given that the proposals would not detract from the safety of the building if there was a fire.

10.0 EQUALITIES

10.1 Depending on which option is selected consideration must be given to the location of noise baffles to ensure they do not impede access on the ground floor.

11.0 RISKS

11.1 There will be potential risks associated with customer and organisational conversations being overheard inadvertently if the works are not completed. The atrium acts as a smoke vent and Fire engineers have been consulted and advised that the proposals in this report are acceptable and do not compromise fire safety matters in the building.

12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

12.1 Any decisions related to this report will have a minimal impact on climate change.

13.0 CONSULTATION

13.1 The issue of acoustics in reception has been raised by partners and members of staff.

14.0 WARDS AFFECTED

14.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer: David Blanchard

Date: 9th January 2013

Appendices: Appendix A – Images of options

Background Papers: None

Reference: X: C'tee, Council & Sub-C'tees/PFA/2012-13/