

## BRIEFING NOTE

<b>Project Name</b>	Grimsby Towns Fund programme – Central Library building
<b>Date of This Report</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
<b>Date of Previous Report</b>	N/A
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### **Background Towns Fund:**

In March 2021 Government announced a funding offer to the Council of £20.9m of Towns Fund to deliver six projects set out in the Town Investment Plan for Grimsby, with the ambition that this funding will deliver transformational economic, social and cultural benefits for the town.

The Central Library project (one of six) has been allocated £4.2m of the £20.9m Towns Fund awarded to Grimsby, with the core focus to refurbish the currently unused space within the upper floors to accommodate new uses, including the potential for a new learning and skills hub.

The other five projects approved for Towns Fund were:

- The Activation and Community Engagement (ACE) Fund, launched in November 2021, for delivery over a 3-year period. This is a local grant programme for community and local business-based initiatives which create diversification of activity within the town centre.
- Bringing St James House back into use as a multi-functional venue for businesses and creatives to attract more people into the town centre and to complement the regeneration works completed in St James' Quarter.
- The development of a new public square at Riverhead Square.
- Better pedestrian and cycle loops to connect the town centre and Alexandra Dockside.
- The next phase of development of Garth Lane towards the creation of a major new waterfront residential community.

### **Description of the Central Library project:**

#### **Central Library:**

The lending library is located on the ground floor (including ground floor mezzanine), which includes public IT, and access to Council services, whilst the basement houses a library support function including storage and offices, plus the local studies (family and history) archive, and reference materials. The library previously occupied the full building but was reduced in 2013/14 due to funding challenges. Therefore, the

first, second and, third floors are closed to the public and not in use as they require major building upgrades, plus their infrastructure does not provide adequate provision for current building requirements.

**Central Library project headlines:**

- The total building provides over 3,000 square metres of space (gross) and the library provision occupies roughly half of this with the remainder being available for alternative uses.
- EQUANS produced initial refurbishment costings, based upon completing essential building repairs and bringing the upper floors back into use in an open plan format, enabling future occupation for various potential uses.
- Due to the well publicised global financial uncertainty and associated inflation resulting in higher material and build costs, the costs to refurbish the building increased. This means that to ensure the Towns Fund budget of £4.2m is not exceeded, only essential repairs to the building and refurbishment to enable use of the first and second floors is currently considered feasible.
- Although the final use of the upper floors is still being determined with support from One Public Estate resources, the ambition for a centrally based Green Skills Hub remains and the library building could potentially host this.
- The existing footprint of the library on the lower floors is not proposed to change at present with a commitment to a town centre library presence. However, during refurbishment works, including asbestos removal, the services from Central Library will naturally need to either close or relocate during the construction period. Clearly, there are financial considerations in relation to this that will feed into the business case.

**Next Steps:**

- As indicated, the business case and works programme is being developed and once in a suitable draft form, will be put before the Tourism and Visitor Economy Scrutiny Panel for consideration.