

Library and Children's Centre Project – Management Response

Lessons Learnt

The review highlighted a number of areas where lessons have been learnt. The purpose of this document is to provide assurance to the Committee that changes have been made as a result.

The weaknesses identified by the review were mainly encountered during the project initiation phase and can be summarised into three key areas:

1. Establishment of formal project governance arrangements

The Project Board was established in September 2016, after the formal approval of the project. Elected Members were not invited onto the Board until later, in December 2016.

The Project Management Framework that is now in place for all projects of this scale and profile, requires Project Boards to be established earlier to oversee the project initiation and feasibility work. These Boards include as a minimum the relevant Portfolio Holder and some instances the Ward Member or a Scrutiny Representative.

2. Budget Setting

The review identified that the project was brought forward for formal approval too soon, with the budget based on preliminary figures. Furthermore, feasibility studies were not undertaken early enough.

The project governance arrangements that are now in place manage the risk of this situation occurring again. A project board overseeing the initiation phase will provide more effective challenge to the development of the plans and budget.

One issue identified by the review was that Finance were not closely involved until the procurement stage of the Library and Children's Centre. Project Boards include a representative from Finance, ensuring that there is now much earlier engagement.

3. Effective challenge of proposals

There is an acceptance on the part of the management that more should have been done to ensure that all relevant costs were included in the budget presented for approval. It is also accepted that there should have been a more robust response to the challenge from elected members to reduce costs. This could have been achieved through an evidence based approach, such as feasibility studies, surveys etc.

The project governance arrangements that are now in place ensure that plans and budgets are presented for formal approval once they have been thoroughly scrutinised and authorised to progress. Project Boards have collective responsibility for deciding when a project is ready to seek formal budget approval.

In addition to this, there is now monthly reporting to Strategic Management Team on the status and risk of all corporate projects. This provides an additional layer of challenge outside of the project boards and allows for the independent escalation of issues.