

Agenda Item 11

For decision –Proposal to acquire the leasehold of rooms at Frome Railway Station

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Summary

Two rooms that were previously occupied by a local taxi company have become available at Frome Railway Station and are being offered by GWR for use by FTC and the wider community. As the rooms have access directly onto the main platform and the area around the station is developing rapidly with growing footfall, they represent a valuable community asset that could be used for a variety of purposes including supporting our efforts to encourage more active and sustainable travel.

Councillors are recommended to approve taking on the lease of these rooms until 30 March 2023 with FTC's costs at £2,660 being met from the approved Resilience EMR.

The proposal

Rail operator, GWR have offered FTC two rooms at Frome Railway Station for use as a community resource. The rooms total 21 sq. metres or 225 sq. ft. in area and have access directly onto the main platform. The rooms were previously used by a local taxi company. The space is available on a lease for a period until 30 March 2023, but it is understood that the term could be extended.

The benefits of taking the rooms

The rooms could be used for a variety of community purposes. They include but are not restricted to:

- A meeting point/office base/equipment store for the Friends of Frome Station - this voluntary group has already greatly improved the station and the rooms would support the group's ongoing efforts
- Encouraging active travel – the station has the potential to be one of several active travel hubs in the town providing not only useful information on various active travel projects but also an opportunity to hire e-bikes that would enable people travelling by train to Frome to hire an e-bike to get around the town. Access to the space would enable a bid to be made for the necessary funding to expand our e-bike hire provision with the space being used to promote established projects in the interim.
- A space for the display of information on the station's railway history – it is understood that Frome Heritage Museum is prepared to work on this project

Opportunities such as this don't come up that often and so it is felt that we should act now to benefit the town.

The financial implications

Allowing for a 3-month rent free period that has been negotiated, the total cost of the rent to 30 March 2023 would be £3k. £2k of this cost is being grant aided by the South Wessex Community Rail Partnership with the balance to be found by FTC. There is also £1,660 to pay in legal costs (landlord's costs and our own) bringing the total cost to FTC in 2022/23 to £2,660. It is proposed that this cost is met from the approved Resilience EMR.

The rooms require some redecoration, but this work will be undertaken by volunteers from the Friends of Frome Station.

Recommendation

Agree a lease of two rooms at Frome Railway Station until 30 March 2023 to be funded by the approved Resilience EMR at £2,660