



The purpose of this paper is to ask Members to determine a response to a proposal from HSBC for temporary occupancy by the Town Council of their Ventnor Branch occupancy.

No. DETAIL

1) CONTEXT

- a) Following the Town Council's letter expressing concerns about the consequences of the closure of the Bank the Mayor and Clerks met with their Portsmouth and Southampton Area Director, Madelaine Phillips, along with local Branch Manager Nikki Alexander and Deputy Area Director (Business Banking) Terry Rice on 8 October.
 - b) As expected, they were clear that the closure on 20 November would proceed as planned and during the discussion that followed the Mayor identified the negative impact on the town of such a prominent building standing empty and boarded up as one of the issues of concern to the Town Council.
 - c) In the context of HSBC's corporate responsibility policy, Nikki Alexander said she would explore the possibility of temporary use by the Town Council for purposes to be agreed.
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2) DEVELOPMENT

- a) The response was an email from Suzanne Wells, Senior Surveyor, Retail – Corporate Occupier Services on 20 October that in addition for asking about the proposed Town Council use of the building included:
HSBC looks to support local charities and initiatives wherever possible, and we could consider letting the premises on a temporary basis, subject to access always being made available for viewings.
 - b) Our response was qualified by the fact that detailed proposals for use would need planning time and sight of the spaces available but, following a staff meeting with the Mayor, the our proposal was:
Our initial use would take the form of a regularly staffed information point not only for the Town Council – our current offices are behind the High Street - but also as a contact point for residents with the range of public service providers and voluntary organisations providing advice and support.
 - c) That was positively accepted by email on 22 October together with a commitment to propose a basis for the Town Council's occupancy from 7 December following the completion of their stripping out of the building.
 - d) In response to our request that the proposal be available in time to be considered by the Town Council meeting of 9 November, the terms were identified in an email from Suzanne Wells on 6 November.
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3) TERMS

- a) The email informs that the current running costs of the building - for business rates, water, gas and electricity - are £650 a month but as it she expects the Town Council's use of utilities to be less than current the use of the building is offered on the basis of an all-inclusive charge of £550 a month.
 - b) The proposed basis is that of a Licence to Occupy with effect from 5 December 2015 terminable at two weeks' notice.
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4) RECOMMENDATION

- a) The Public Buildings Working Group considered the developments at its meeting of 3 November.
 - b) It concluded that, subject to there being no charge for a rent, given the opportunity of preventing the building standing empty and unused and of testing the value of a High Street
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presence for the Town Council and its Our Place partners they would recommend acceptance of the offer and the development and implementation of the proposals for its use.

- c) Consequently the Town Council is recommended to proceed with the temporary occupancy of the HSBC Bank Building in line with the outline of its use identified in this Report.
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