## Title
Petition re: Closure of the Civic Centre

### Report of the Chief Executive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Report</th>
<th>For Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wards Affected:</strong> Heath</td>
<td><strong>Key Decision:</strong> No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Report Author:</strong> John Dawe, Democratic Services Group Manager</td>
<td><strong>Contact Details:</strong> Tel: 020 8227 2135 E-mail: <a href="mailto:john.dawe@lbbd.gov.uk">john.dawe@lbbd.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountable Divisional Director:</strong> Fiona Taylor, Head of Legal and Democratic Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountable Director:</strong> Chris Naylor, Chief Executive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary

The Council has received a petition containing over 2000 signatures from local borough residents, supporting a campaign being led by Jon Cruddas, MP to save and protect the Dagenham Civic Centre.

The petition calls upon the Council to repeal the decision to convert the Civic Centre into a school, on the basis the current decision endangers the quality and accessibility of good public services for the residents of Dagenham.

In accordance with the Council’s procedures for petitions, the lead petitioner, Jon Cruddas MP, on this occasion represented by Andrew Achilleos, has been invited to the meeting to present the petition.

### Recommendation(s)

PAASC is asked to consider the terms of the petition based on the process set out in the report, and to decide whether to:

(i) Reject the terms of the petition; or

(ii) Defer a decision pending further information or additional research to be carried out on the basis that a final decision will be made at a subsequent meeting, or

(iii) Support the terms of the petition and, in so doing, recommend a course of action to the Cabinet to consider.

### Reason(s)

Under the Council’s Petition Scheme as set out on the Council’s website, petitioners are entitled to a debate at the appropriate Select Committee if the petition has the support of 1500 or more signatures from different addresses in the borough.
As this petition exceeds that threshold it has triggered the requirement for a debate at the Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The Cabinet, at its meeting held on 16 December 2015, received a report on the “Rationalisation of the Corporate Office Portfolio”. The proposals in the report were based on the principle that continuing to retain the current number of offices provided too much capacity; incurred unnecessary costs and did not support the implementation of more efficient, flexible ways of working vital to providing cost effective services in the future. The report included a number of options to reduce and reconfigure the number of corporate offices arising from which the Cabinet resolved to:

(i) Approve Option 4c (retain and open plan Barking Town Hall; retain Pondfield House; convert Dagenham Civic Centre to secondary school use; dispose of Roycraft House to Agilisys with leaseback of two floors for Council office use; dispose / redevelop Frizlands Offices and John Smith House as offices / residential use) as the recommended option to rationalise the Council's office portfolio and help increase operational efficiency to support the implementation of Flexible Ways of Working;

(ii) Approve the borrowing of £4.31m from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) to fund the capital expenditure required to implement Option 4c as set out in the report;

(iii) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Chief Finance Officer and the Cabinet Members for Finance and Regeneration, to negotiate terms and agree the contract documents to fully implement and effect the projects; and

(iv) Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, or an authorised delegate on her behalf, to execute all of the legal agreements, contracts and other documents on behalf of the Council.

1.2 The report upon which the decision was taken was presented to Cabinet in the exempt part of the agenda as it contained commercially sensitive information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council. To enable the report to be considered by PAASC in an open setting, the exempt information has been redacted. The report, together with its appendices (1-4), is set out at Appendix A.

1.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance and the Chief Finance Officer have both been invited to attend the meeting to answer questions in relation to the decision made by Cabinet and provide any clarification on issues arising from the Select Committee’s consideration of the petition.
2. Proposal and Issues

2.1 The objective of the meeting is for the Select Committee to gather as much evidence as possible so as to come to a view on the terms of the petition. The Council’s process for considering petitions is set out below:

- The lead petitioner or their designated representative(s) will be invited to verbally present the petition, and in so doing present any supporting evidence they have gathered. The lead petitioner will need to prepare their evidence carefully in advance as this will play a key role in the select Committee’s deliberations. It may help to provide written evidence and submit it to the committee in advance.

- The lead petitioner will have up to 15 minutes to make their case. The Lead Member for Finance and/or the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) will if required present evidence as to the basis of the decision taken that lead to the petition being presented, also taking up to 15 minutes.

- Members of the Select Committee will then question the lead petitioner and the Lead Member and/or the CFO. The Chair may also allow the lead petitioner the opportunity to question the Lead Member and/or the CFO, and, if appropriate, vice versa.

- The Chair will indicate when he believes the Select Committee has heard all the relevant evidence and sufficiently explored the matter in hand. The Chair may then summarise the debate, and outline the next steps as set out below.

- The Select Committee, if they so choose, will then retire for private deliberation to come to a view on the petition, having regard to the aforementioned evidence as presented and debated at the meeting.

- The Select Committee will return and the Lead Member will read out the decision. There will be no further debate on the matter at the meeting.

2.2 The options open to the Select Committee in terms of its decision-making are:

i. Reject the terms of the petition, or
ii. Defer a decision pending further information or additional research to be carried out on the basis that a final decision will be made at a subsequent meeting, or
iii. Support the terms of the petition and, in so doing, recommend a course of action to the Cabinet to consider.

2.3 There is no right of appeal by the petitioner to the decision of the Select Committee. Similarly, in the event that the matter is referred back to the Cabinet under (iii) above, there is no right of appeal against any decision that the Cabinet may make.

3. Financial Implications

*Implications completed by: Jonathan Bunt, Chief Finance Officer*
3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this Petition report which, due to the subject of the petition namely the proposed closure of the Civic Centre, includes a copy of the report submitted to Cabinet on 16 December 2014 – *Rationalisation of Corporate Office Portfolio* which includes a full financial analysis.

4. Legal Implications

*Implications completed by: Paul Feild, Senior Lawyer*

4.1 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report. The Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee in receipt of the Petition is not acting in a statutory scrutiny function. Chapter 8 paragraph 2.3(a) sets out as a locally determined decision that within their terms of reference each Select Committee will be responsible for receiving petitions regarding services within their terms of reference.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

- **Appendix A** - “Rationalisation of Corporate Office Portfolio” Report to Cabinet, 16 December 2014