

Scrutiny briefing note

The Economy Scrutiny Panel has asked for an update on the following issues. This briefing contains the latest position as of October 2021.

Subject: Disposal of sites suitable for development across North East Lincolnshire

There are a number of sites across the Borough where the Council hold the freehold ownership - and therefore the maintenance liability – and where those particular sites offer no material benefit to the local area. These sites may have been acquired previously (i.e. through CPO) or which should have transferred as part of the Large-Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) of Council housing and land to a housing association in 2005.

The types of sites being considered would be those that benefit from vacant possession, and which are not classified as *Operational property* (administrative, Civic, highway, amenity, open space or parks and recreation grounds); or should be held in support of *Transition property* (Regeneration, Economic or Housing (as identified in the Local Plan)) or *Investment property* (Commercial) purposes as outlined in the Property Policy.

The sites would be those that the Council have simply maintained for a number of years which may be subject to anti-social behaviour or fly-tipping. The sites would be taken to the open market to seek opportunities and inviting expressions of interest to facilitate improvement by way of a freehold disposal on an individual or collective basis. Due to the size and location of the sites it is likely the expected capital receipt would fall under the threshold of Cabinet and therefore authority to dispose would be delegated via an Officer Decision Record (ODR).

A report to Cabinet will seek authority for the principle for Officers to consider a number of the sites as outlined above across our Borough. Each site will be subject to a full appraisal by appropriate workstreams including Estates, Legal, Highways, Planning, Ecology, Grounds Maintenance, Heritage and Conservation to confirm that any proposal to progress a disposal is appropriate and will result in enhancement to the area and if necessary, with conditions that the site will be developed in a timely manner.

The evaluation process will also include whether there are any byelaws, covenants or restrictions that would prevent disposal and/ or if appropriate, whether there would be any provision to mitigate against such conditions which could still result in sites being disposed to facilitate improvement.

Approval to the in-principle disposals would enable sites to be sold to developers, adjacent property or landowners or communities for a market value. In instances where an offer considers the social, economic or environmental benefits, proposals would progress through the Council's approach to Community Asset Transfers (CAT) demonstrating sustainability and viability, as outlined through a detailed Business Case and a further report would be considered by Cabinet under the 'Less than Best' protocol as part of achieving best value.

The in-principle approval from Cabinet, if supported, will result in the delegated authority by the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Resources, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets via a formal Officer Decision Record (ODR) or if it transpires as a result of the evaluation that a key decision is required – i.e. value is above 350k or 'Less than Best'; constitutes public or political interest; a further report outlining proposals for any specific site will be presented to Cabinet for approval at a future meeting.

NEXT STEPS

It is intended that the proposal set out above is recommended to Cabinet at its meeting of the 1st December 2021.

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