

Cabinet Committee - Asset Disposals – Meeting held on Thursday, 13th October, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Anderson, Hulme and Mann

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Ajaib

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

2. Functions of Cabinet Committee - Asset Disposals

As it was the first meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Asset Disposals, Members received and noted the functions of the committee as set out in the Constitution.

The Leader would chair the committee and in addition to himself, it was noted that he had appointed the following Lead Members as committee members:

- Councillor Pavitar K. Mann, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for Housing and Planning.
- Councillor Zaffar Ajaib, Cabinet member for Customer Services, Procurement & Performance.
- Councillor Rob Anderson, Cabinet member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets.
- Councillor Christine Hulme, Cabinet member for Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills.

The Committee had been established to enable thorough and detailed consideration of the asset disposal programme and proposed disposals, which was a key part of the Council's financial strategy and recovery and improvement plans. It would make recommendations to Cabinet on disposals that were key decisions or on matters otherwise reserved to Cabinet.

The provisions relating to managing conflicts of interest were noted. It was recognised that as Lead Members they had regular contact with developers and other parties with property interests. Members were advised to seek advice prior to any future disposal decisions if they had any queries or concerns about potential conflicts.

The Executive Procedure Rules applied to the Committee, therefore amongst other provisions, other councillors and members of the public may request to speak or ask questions at committee meetings.

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One of the functions of the committee was to monitor and review the asset disposal programme and it was proposed and agreed that there be a standing item with an update report to the committee so progress could be tracked and monitored.

Resolved –

- (a) That the functions of the Cabinet Committee for Asset Disposals be noted.
- (b) That the Committee receive an update report each month on progress of the asset disposal programme.

3. Asset Disposals Strategy

The Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets introduced a report that sought agreement to recommend to Cabinet approval of an Asset Disposal Strategy as part of the approach to dispose of assets in order to obtain capital receipts and reduce the Council's debt.

The Strategy sought to ensure best use of the Council's property assets and, where identified for disposal, that best consideration be achieved. The Lead Member for Financial Oversight & Assets highlighted the importance of the phasing of the programme of disposals which sought to sell out-of-borough and non-operational assets first and to generate capital receipts at an early stage of the programme as this would help reduce borrowing costs. As the programme progressed careful consideration would need to be given to assets which were in use by the council or where there were wider policy and strategic considerations to take into account. For example, it was noted that the Council's accommodation strategy would need to be aligned to the asset disposal programme and it was agreed this strategy would be considered at future meeting.

One of the priorities should be disposing of empty assets at an early stage of the programme and the committee asked that information be provided in future update reports on whether the asset was empty and if so for how long.

Appendix 4 to the report included the list of assets proposed for marketing and disposal in Phase 1 of the programme. The Committee reviewed the list in detail and discussed a number of specific issues relating to individual sites to be satisfied they were surplus to operational requirements. In terms of the process, it was confirmed that the decision being recommended to Cabinet was to enable marketing but that each disposal that was a key decision would come to Cabinet for decision.

The list at Appendix 4 to the report was agreed as surplus with the exception of 2 Victoria Street and 34 Herschel Street as the Committee sought to ensure these properties could not be brought back into use for temporary accommodation, which was a significant financial pressure on the Council. It

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was agreed to give delegated authority to declare these two properties surplus and progress for disposal in consultation with the Lead Members for Financial Oversight & Council Assets and Housing & Planning once any potential future use had been clarified.

The Committee also discussed the inclusion of the Adelphi and MacKenzie Street sites and given their strategic importance to town centre redevelopment members agreed that further consideration of the options would be needed before any decisions could be taken on disposal. The Adelphi site was of significant local interest and had potential amenity uses which would need to be explored. It was agreed that they could be declared surplus to the Council's operational requirements, but that further consideration would be needed before they were progressed for disposal.

Resolved – That it be recommended to Cabinet to:

- (a) Agree the Asset Disposals Strategy set out at Appendix 1.
- (b) Approve the declaration of the assets listed in Appendix 4 as surplus and to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing and Property, in consultation with the appropriate lead member and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to market these assets for disposal, subject to:
 - i. The removal of 2 Victoria Street and 34 Herschel Street from the list of assets declared surplus.
- (c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets and the Lead Member for Housing & Planning, to determine whether 2 Victoria Street and 34 Herschel Street should be declared surplus and to commence marketing.
- (d) Approve the proposed Asset Disposals Programme budget.

4. Disposal of Council Asset at Montem Lane

The Committee considered a report that sought agreement to recommend to Cabinet the disposal of land assets at Montem Lane which was one of the sites owned by the Council and opted to Slough Urban Renewal (SUR).

The proposed sale had been subject to option review and a due diligence process which confirmed the offer reflected best consideration reasonably obtainable for the disposal. Members noted the exempt information in Part II of the agenda in considering the report.

It was agreed that the proposed approach was supported on the basis that it 'de-risked' the Council and generated a capital receipt whilst achieving the intended outcome of securing housing development on the site.

Resolved – That it be recommended to Cabinet to:

- (a) Agree to the disposal of the Montem Lane asset and to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing and Property, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight and Council Assets and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to enter into the sale contract and the related legal documentation in connection with the disposal in accordance with the Heads of Terms and Site Development Plan (SDP) appended at Appendix 4 and 2 to the report.
- (b) Approve the Draft Formal Site Development Plan for Montem Lane so that this document can be considered to be “Adopted” in accordance with the terms of the SUR Partnership Agreement (PA).

5. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the matters in Part II of the agenda be considered and resolved during Part I, without disclosing any of the exempt information, but that the Part II reports remain restricted as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

The following is a summary of the matters considered during Part II of the agenda:

6. Asset Disposals Strategy - Appendices 2 and 3

The Part II appendices, which contained exempt information, were noted.

7. Disposal of Council Asset at Montem Lane - Appendices

The Part II appendices, which contained exempt information, were noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.32 pm and closed at 5.50 pm)