

Cabinet

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	4 April 2018
Officer	<p><u>Cabinet Member</u> Tony Ferrari – Cabinet Member for Community and Resources</p> <p><u>Local Members</u> Kate Wheller – Portland Harbour Katharine Garcia – Portland Tophill</p> <p><u>Lead Officer</u> Richard Bates - Chief Financial Officer</p>
Subject of Report	Disposal of Former Brackenbury Infant School Site, Fortuneswell, Portland
Executive Summary	<p>This report sets out a proposal that has been received from Portland Town Council to acquire the former Brackenbury School site at an undervalue, which was reported to the Cabinet as part of the Quarterly Asset Management report in March.</p> <p>A financial assessment has been undertaken which considers the merits of the option to transfer the site to Portland Town Council against the option of disposing of the site on the open market. It concludes that overall there is little financial difference to the County Council between the two approaches.</p> <p>As there will be significant community benefits to be derived from the Town Council's proposal, it is recommended that the County Council accepts its offer.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>This proposal is in line with a strategy set out in the Asset Management Plan. The EQIA undertaken on the Asset Management Plan identified the need to ensure that the interests and needs of the nine equality groups are addressed at service level as part of the service asset management planning process, including consultation with users. This recommendation conforms with this.</p> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>The Asset Management Plan 2015-18 specifies that 'where it is identified that services can be provided more effectively by a community</p>

	<p>body, to work with that body to enable this and, if appropriate, to facilitate the transfer of a property asset to the body in accordance with the County Council's guidelines for Transferring Assets to Community Bodies. This proposal has been considered against those criteria and ratified as being sound.</p>
	<p>Budget:</p> <p>The disposal would generate a capital receipt of £100,000, which is considered to be at an undervalue of c £325,000. However, it would free up an asset which could be disposed for c £200,000 and potentially free up other assets that could also be disposed for c £950,000.</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW</p>
	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>The acceptance of this proposal would provide a permanent base for Portland Town Council; it would enhance the nursery provision in the Fortuneswell area and it would provide a community hub for the locality and a facility for older people to attend.</p>
Recommendation	<p>It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the use of the County Council's general powers of competence to transfer the former Brackenbury School site at Fortuneswell to Portland Town Council at an undervalue and otherwise on terms to be agreed by the Chief Financial Officer.</p>
Reason for Recommendation	<p>A well-managed Council ensures that the best use is made of its assets in terms of optimising service benefit, minimising environmental impact and maximising financial return.</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 - Plan of site area</p>
Background Papers	<p>Quarterly Asset Management Report – 7th March 2018</p>
Officer Contact	<p>Name: Peter Scarlett, Estate & Assets Service Manager Tel: (01305) 221940 Email: p.scarlett@dorsetcc.gov.uk</p>

1.0 Background

- 1.1 An update was brought to the Cabinet in March notifying the Cabinet that a proposal had been received from Portland Town Council (PTC) to transfer the Brackenbury Infant School building site to the Town Council at an undervalue, which would necessitate the use of the County Council's general powers of competence.

- 1.2 The site has been vacant since 2013, when the infant school moved out of the premises to the newly constructed Chesil Cove School. The building was constructed in 1991 and is still in relatively good order and the County Council held back from disposing of it whilst it ascertained whether there might be any community uses that the building could be put to. Initially no proposal came forward and therefore at its meeting on 7th June 2017 Cabinet approved the disposal of the site. During the marketing process a Community Right to Bid application was registered on the building and subsequently the County Council received a proposal to transfer the site to the Portland Town Council. The Town Council has put forward an offer of £100,000 for the site.
- 1.3 A comprehensive business case has been put forward by Portland Town Council and in summary it proposes to create a Community Hub which will provide:
- Offices, storage, a hall and car park use for Portland Town Council
 - A new larger location for Allsorts Nursery including 4 large classroom areas, a larger play area, access to the hall so that children can participate in shared activities for example with the elderly, give performances etc, enabling Allsorts to expand their provision to include day-care for babies and toddlers and parent and toddler sessions linking with parenting skills activities and courses
 - A new home for the food bank which needs to move from its current location
 - A venue in Fortuneswell for activities for older residents, including lunches
 - An internet café, with assistance, providing computer and scanning facilities for residents who do not have these facilities to enable them to make applications, submit documents etc
 - Adult education courses in skills for the workplace (IT, literacy, numeracy etc)
 - A hall and a studio/classroom for hire to the community and service providers
 - Other spaces for rent/hire to the community and service providers as need arises.
- 1.4 The proposal that the Town Council has put forward would also free up land to the rear of the site which is currently occupied by Allsorts Nursery, who would otherwise remain in situ if the site was sold on the open market. This land could therefore be sold, generating a further capital receipt.

2.0 Financial Assessment

- 2.1 An assessment of the financial case of disposing of the site on the open market, against that of disposing of the site to Portland Town Council has been undertaken. The capital receipt that could be generated from a sale of the site on the open market is assessed to be c £325,000 greater than a sale of the site to PTC. However, PTC's proposal would free up the Allsorts nursery site at the rear of the site. It is proposed to package this up with sufficient land to generate a capital receipt of £200,000 for the County Council.
- 2.2 If the County Council sought to dispose of the site on the open market, rather than transferring it to PTC, there is a strong chance that an application would be made for Local Green Space designation on part of the site which was formerly a playing field (as members of the community have indicated that they would wish to see this green space preserved). This would at best delay any sale, and could lead to a reduction in the anticipated value.
- 2.3 The creation of a 'community hub' by PTC would create various spaces for community uses. PTC has stated that it would welcome community functions currently undertaken by the County Council from other buildings in the locality being centralised in the new community hub facility. This would not only tie in with the County Council's wider strategy of bringing services into multi-functional buildings, but it could enable the County Council to free up other buildings, removing their running costs and generating valuable capital receipts.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 Overall, whilst there are uncertainties with each possible option, it is considered that financially, there is little financial difference to the County Council between selling the site on the open market and selling at an undervalue to Portland Town Council. It is clear that there

would be significant community benefit from the creation of a community hub in the Fortuneswell locality.

- 3.2 It is therefore recommended that the Cabinet approves the use of the County Council's general powers of competence to transfer the former Brackenbury School site at Fortuneswell to Portland Town Council at an undervalue and otherwise on terms to be agreed by the Chief Financial Officer.

Richard Bates
Chief Financial Officer
April 2018

Appendix 1

