

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	DISPOSAL OF LAND IN DERBY ROAD		
DATE OF DECISION:	15 MARCH 2010		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND LOCAL SERVICES		
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

The Confidential Appendix contains information deemed to be exempt from general publication based on Category 3 of paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules as contained in the Council's Constitution. It is not in the public interest to disclose this information because publication of this information could influence bids received for a property which may be to the Council's financial detriment.

SUMMARY

This report seeks authority to dispose of the site of the former Neighbourhood Advice Centre at Rope Walk at market value, preferably for community use. If disposal for community use cannot be achieved then approval is sought to dispose for affordable housing use. If disposal for affordable housing use cannot be achieved then approval is sought to dispose of the site on the open market.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) To agree to dispose of the site at Rope Walk, Derby Rd to facilitate the provision of a community facility and retention of the community garden
- (ii) If negotiated agreement for disposal for community use, in accordance with recommendation (i) cannot be reached, to agree disposal for affordable housing use.
- (iii) In the event that recommendations (i) and (ii) cannot be achieved, to agree disposal on the open market.
- (iv) To determine that the disposal will contribute to the improvement of social well-being of residents.
- (v) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Workforce Planning and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Local Services, the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and the Solicitor to the Council, to agree detailed terms of the disposal in line with the parameters set out in the Appendix to this report.

- (vi) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods following consultation with the Cabinet Member for housing and Local Services, Solicitor to the Council, Head of finance and Head of Property and Procurement to agree the future management arrangements for the Community Garden.
- (vii) Delegate authority to the Solicitor to the Council, following consultation with the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and Executive Director of Resources to do anything necessary to give effect to the proposals contained within this report.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The former Neighbourhood Advice Centre and car park was closed in May 2009 and the land is now surplus to Council requirements. Consultation of key stake holders has identified a desire to see the site used as a community facility.

CONSULTATION

2. Consultation (from October to December 2008) regarding changes to the Neighbourhood Advice Service was undertaken as part of the council's 2009/10 budget setting process.
3. The council had initial discussions with Hyde Martlet Housing Association about selling this site to develop more affordable homes. Following requests from community representatives at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 18th January 2010 the council decided to consult more widely on the possible future uses for the site. Key stakeholders in the community were invited to a drop-in event held in the former Neighbourhood Advice Centre on Thursday 11th February 2010. They were also invited to provide comments in writing or by telephone.
4. 244 people attended the drop-in event on 11th February 2010, 92 people provided feedback comments and 11 people provided comments prior to the event.
5. Community consultation suggested the following uses for the site as listed below with a strong preference for the provision of community facilities.
 - To provide community facilities
 - Use by the Pakistani Welfare Association
 - Use as an Advice Centre
 - Used for play/young people
 - Used for the elderly
 - Used for education
 - Used by the Mosque
 - Not to be used for housing
 - Used for a soup run
 - To be kept as open space
 - Used for secular use

- Used for a car park to enable those whose homes back onto the site have rear access by car
- Used for women's groups
- Used for a Somali centre

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6. Sell the site in the open market immediately: Whilst this option would generate a 100% usable capital receipt from the sale of the site, this might lead to development unsympathetic with the garden site at the rear of the property. It is not recommended that this option is pursued as this would not contribute to the provision of facility to benefit the local community. In the event that negotiations cannot secure this the provision of new affordable housing in the City to help meet the need for 1,391 new units of affordable housing per year identified in the Housing Needs Survey.

DETAIL

7. Land at Rope Walk comprises of two elements. Firstly, the Neighbourhood Advice Centre which was decommissioned as part of the 2009/10 budget setting process. The centre was closed in May 2009 and the service reconfigured to form the Housing and Money Advice Service relocated at Southbrook Rise. This service now has a strong focus on providing an outreach service throughout the whole of Southampton. The centre has not been used since its closure and it is this land which this report seeks to dispose of.
8. Secondly, at the rear of the Centre is the Ropewalk Community Garden. This is managed by a group of volunteers, who give their time to a range of activities from gardening to arts and crafts. The 'Friends' of the Garden are a legally constituted body who have attracted funding and support from agencies such as the Environment Centre, University of Southampton and Groundwork. This proposal would not alter the nature of the Community Garden. The council supports the continuation of this project and the provision of the garden within the inner city. There is no revenue budget provision in relation to the community garden so the future operational arrangements will need to be at no cost to the Council.
9. The site is currently in the General Fund and is part of the Housing and Local Services portfolio.
10. Following requests from community representatives at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 18th January 2010 the Council consulted with key stakeholders on the possible future uses for the site. Feedback indicated that stakeholders wished to see this site used for the community.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital

11. The disposal will generate a capital receipt. This receipt will be available to fund schemes in the General Fund capital programme.

Revenue

12. There is no revenue impact. The council will not expect to revenue fund a community facility on this site. It would be required to stand alone financially including any adaptations made to the building and the costs of maintenance and repairs to the building.

Property

13. The former Neighbourhood Advice Centre is surplus to Council requirements.

Other

14. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

15. The statutory power to dispose is Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Other Legal Implications:

16. None.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

17. Provision of the site for community use could assist with social cohesion.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line

Appendices

1.	Confidential Appendix – Current Market Value
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Background Documents

Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

1.	None	
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Background documents available for inspection at: N/A

KEY DECISION? YES

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All, especially Bevois
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