

FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

12 September 2012

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Paul Thompson (Finance and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Chris Little, Chief Finance Officer
Graham Frankland, Assistant Director, Resources
Dale Clark, Estates and Asset Manager
Rachel Clark, HR Business Partner
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

23. Former Henry Smiths School King Oswy Drive *(Assistant Director, Resources)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference RN13/09.

Purpose of report

To report on the tenders received for the purchase of the site.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided the history to the site of the former Henry Smith School in King Oswy Drive which was closed and demolished in 2002/3. The marketing of the site had commenced in May 2012 and two tenders had been received and were included in confidential Appendix 2. **This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).** On the basis that neither tender was deemed acceptable as it was considered that they fell short of the market value of the site, it was proposed that both offers were rejected. However, it was suggested that further consideration be undertaken on how affordable housing could be provided on this site.

It was recognised that whilst the Vela Group had secured a conditional HCA grant in relation to the King Oswy Drive site, further discussions were ongoing with the Council's Planning Services Manager to explore options of facilitating the development of the site in two phases to enable an appropriate area of land to be released for disposal.

The two local residents in attendance addressed the meeting. A number of concerns were highlighted by the residents, including loss of privacy for residents whose properties faced the site, concerns about emergency access to properties in the area and health and safety concerns during the construction phase of the site from the access and egress of site vehicles to the site. In addition, a resident questioned whether the holders of the allotments adjacent to the site had been consulted on the proposals to develop the site.

It was recognised that the majority of residents' concerns would be considered in detail as part of the consultation process involved in the planning process and until such time as a detailed planning application was submitted, it was difficult to comment on the potential final layout for the site. The planning consultation process would include various bodies such as the emergency services and all residents affected by the development of the site. It was suggested that in addition to this, consultation be undertaken with the relevant allotment holders on the proposals and future of the allotments. In response to a point raised by one of the residents, the Estates and Asset Manager confirmed that the site was currently private land and not available for recreational purposes.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the bids received were far short of the estimated value for the site and that in the current economic climate, protecting Council land and resources was of paramount importance.

Decision

- (a) That both tenders received for the site be rejected on the following grounds:
 - (i) That neither bids reflect the Estates and Asset Manager's opinion of market value.
 - (ii) The proposals submitted do not reflect the requirements of the development brief.
 - (iii) That consultation be undertaken with the relevant allotment holders on the proposals and future of the allotments.
- (b) That further consideration be given to how the proposed affordable housing can be provided.

24. The Joint Marketing and Disposal of Land and Buildings at Friarage Field and Morrison Hall on the Headland *(Assistant Director, Resources)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) applies – Forward Plan Reference 13/09.

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the proposal to market the former Friarage Manor House and adjoining land on behalf of both Henry Smiths Trusts together with Morrison Hall which is owned by the Council.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided the history and background to the two separate sites. It was proposed that the Estates and Asset Manager undertake a full joint marketing exercise on behalf of the Henry Smith's Educational and Non Educational Trusts of land and buildings as shown in Appendix 1 together with Morrison Hall which was in the ownership of the Council.

In response to a question from the Portfolio Holder, the Estates and Asset Manager confirmed that there would be buy back arrangements in place should the site not be developed.

Decision

The report was noted.

25. Treasury Management Advice Arrangements *(Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To detail proposals for extending the existing contract for Treasury Management Advice Services.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report confirmed that the current Treasury Management Advice contract was awarded to Butlers who were acquired by Sector in October 2010. This effectively merged the two main providers of Treasury Management Advice to Local Authorities. The report outlined the benefits from the continued provision of services by Sector and it was noted that in the current economic climate and uncertain market conditions, the Council needed an advisory who understands its position and could help the Council manage in uncertain times.

The Portfolio Holder recognised that in the current challenging economic climate, the consistency and continuation of the provision of Treasury Management Advice was essential.

Decision

The Chief Finance Officer was authorised to enter into negotiations with Sector to continue to provide Treasury Management Advice until 31 March 2014, and to conclude these negotiations if cost was within the budget provision. If the contract cost exceeded the current budget provision, a further report would be submitted before the negotiations were concluded.

26. Banking Arrangements (*Chief Finance Officer*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for an extension to the current banking arrangements to 31 March 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report confirmed the current banking contract was awarded to the Co-operative Bank in November 2002 and in October 2011, the previous Portfolio Holder agreed an extension to 31 March 2013 on the basis of satisfactory contract performance and soft market testing of the contract cost. The benefits of the continued provision of services by the Co-operative Bank were along with the implications of switching to another bank were outlined for the Portfolio Holder's consideration.

The Portfolio Holder questioned whether this could be an opportunity to

secure further financial savings. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the whilst the current arrangement was cost effective, further exploration of future tendering for banking arrangements with other local authorities was being undertaken.

Decision

The Chief Finance Officer was authorised to enter into negotiations with the Co-operative Bank to continue to provide banking services for a further year from 1 April 2013 and to conclude these negotiations if the cost was within the budget provision for this service. If the contract cost exceeded the budget provision, a further report would be submitted before the negotiations were concluded.

27. Employee Attendance 2012/13 – 1st Quarter (*Human Resources Business Partner*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on performance up to the first quarter of 2012/13 and actions taken, or planned, in relation to employee absence.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided details of the Council's performance for employee attendance for the 1st quarter of 2012/13. It highlighted that whilst the actual sickness rate at the end of the 1st quarter was slightly above target at 8.01, it was recognised that the target of 7.70 wte average sickness per employee was very challenging. It as noted that a number of actions were ongoing for the remainder of 2012/13 which were expected to help achieve sickness targets in the future.

The Portfolio Holder recognised that employees were under immense pressure with increasing workloads due to the staffing reductions following the ongoing budgetary savings the Council was required to make.

Decision

That the actions taken, or planned in relation to employee absence in the 1st quarter of 2012/13 were noted.

28. Rating Appeals Update (*Assistant Director, Resources*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the progress of rating appeals.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided the background information in relation to the appointment of Sanderson Weatherall as rating advisors to the Council. It was highlighted that the work carried out by Sanderson Weatherall had resulted in substantial refunds and ongoing savings for the Council and these were summarised within the report. In addition a number of rating reductions and one-off benefits had been secured for schools.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that the appointment of Sanderson Weatherall had proven extremely cost effective.

Decision

The report was noted.

29. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 30 Review of Compulsory Redundancy Dismissal Decision – Human Resources Business Partner. This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 namely information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matters arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority (*para 4*)

30. Review of a Compulsory Redundancy Dismissal Decision *(Human Resources Business Partner)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To review the attached Independent Report (Appendix 1) regarding an employee who was issued with their redundancy dismissal notice and decide whether the earlier decision to approve their compulsory redundancy stands or should be withdrawn.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Details were included within the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

Details were included within the exempt section of the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 4.47 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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