

EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE FOR PROPERTY

A meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee for Property was held on 16 March 2015.

PRESENT: Councillors D Budd, M Carr and J Brunton (substitute for J Rostron)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Arundale, Councillor C Hobson and Councillor J Hobson.

OFFICIALS: Martin Shepherd and Sharron Brown

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor T Harvey, Councillor C M Rooney, Councillor J Rostron, Councillor J Sharrocks

14/36 **TO CONSIDER PASSING A RESOLUTION EXCLUDING THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM OF BUSINESS ON THE GROUNDS THAT IF PRESENT THERE WOULD BE A DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION FALLING WITHIN PARAGRAPHS 1 AND 3 OF SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.**

That the decision to exclude the press and the public was agreed.

14/37 **FORMER NATURES WORLD SITE, LADGATE LANE, ACKLAM, MIDDLESBROUGH**

The Executive Director of Economic Development and Communities submitted a report that sought the views of the Panel on the strategic options for the Nature's World Site together with potential short and medium term uses / management.

A report was submitted to the Executive Sub Committee for Property on the 2nd December 2013 set out the winding up of Natures World and the subsequent transfer of the site to the Council. Executive Sub Committee for Property ordered that:

- a) the potential Council use is fully explored before considering alternative options;
- b) the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) option be progressed if this is not viable; and,
- c) the part disposal of the site if required to recoup the Councils costs and generate investment, be included in both options.

The Council continued to maintain the site on a "moth balling" basis at an approximate cost of £60k per annum, comprising £23k rates, £23k utilities, £12k security and £2k on maintenance. The Council continued to receive interest in the site from a number of organisations both on a commercial and community basis which ranged from horticultural / garden centre, educational use, pet store and themed restaurant. The Council had limited land assets and therefore it had been examining whether there were any future requirements the Council may have had for the site. Services had been contacted across the Council to establish any future requirement for the site as part of a services strategic planning as well as any short or medium term requirements.

A business case was developed by Wellbeing, Care and Learning (WCL), to adapt the existing vacant buildings for Special Educational Need (SEN) provision but the proposal was not progressed, due to the refurbishment / adaptation costs of existing facilities and the likely annual running cost. Due to rising school roles and its proximity to the southern expansion of the Town, the site may be required for the construction of additional school facilities in the medium to long term. Rapid expansion to the South of the Town could also create pressures / demands for future provision for care and medical facilities in this location.

The report outlined in further detail that there were four options available:

1. Option 1 - Community Asset Transfer;
2. Option 2 - Market for Commercial Use
3. Option 3 (Preferred Option) - Retain site for long-term opportunities and explore short term arrangements with partner organisations; and

4. Option 4 - Dispose of under-utilised parts of the site

ORDERED

That Option 3 be progressed, as this would reduce the Councils holding costs and provide some short / medium use for the site but also provide maximum flexibility for the council should it wish to use or develop the remainder of the site in the future.

REASONS

The decision was supported by the following reasons:

1. **The site occupied by one or more strategic partners could be linked to existing regeneration initiative such as Stewarts Park / Newham Grange Leisure Farm or Hemlington Grange.**
2. **The proposal would be linked to appropriate community / educational access to ensure the Councils position regarding any claw-back provision is avoided.**
3. **Environment City who currently occupies 1 North Road will need to secure new premises as the current lease will terminate in 2016.**
4. **Initial discussions have already taken place with Environment City and they have expressed an interest in taking occupation on part of the site.**

The decision will come into force after five working days following the day the decision was published unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures.