

REPORT TO: CABINET

DATE: 27 FEBRUARY 2020

TITLE: DISPOSAL OF MOBILITY HOUSE AND MOBILITY HOUSE ANNEX

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR JOHN STRACHAN, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REGENERATION

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON FREEMAN, HEAD OF FINANCE AND DEPUTY TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (01279) 446228

CONTRIBUTING OFFICER: WILL HALES, PROPERTY AND FACILITIES MANAGER (01279) 446852

This is a Key Decision
It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I011074
Call-in Procedures may apply
This decision will affect Toddbrook Ward.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- A** Declares Mobility House and Mobility House Annex (the Properties) are surplus to requirements.
- B** Approves plans to dispose of the freehold interest in the Properties conditional upon the purchaser delivering a satisfactory scheme of redevelopment.
- C** Delegates authority to the Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, to negotiate and finalise the terms of the disposal and (subject to being satisfied that it would be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable) thereafter procure the legal completion of the sale documentation.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** To facilitate the delivery of a regeneration scheme in the northern sector of the town centre.
- B** To generate a capital receipt to help fund the Council's Capital Programme.

BACKGROUND

1. The owner of Market House has expressed a firm interest in acquiring the Properties. The intention being that the Properties are used to facilitate a wider regeneration scheme including Market House and the Properties themselves.
2. A planning application for the proposed regeneration scheme is due to be determined by the Council's Development Management Committee shortly. The application, registered under ref: HW/FUL/19/00431 provides for 'Demolition of existing garages and A1 unit, erection of an 8 storey residential block of 33 flats with replacement A1 unit at ground floor and creation of a communal roof garden at 1st floor connecting to Market House'.
3. The Properties, the extent of which can be seen edged red on the attached plan attached as Appendix A to the report, extend to approximately 132sq.m (0.0326 acres) in total.
4. The Properties consist of two buildings known as Mobility House and Mobility House Annex, both located to the north of Market House in Harlow Town Centre North.
5. The buildings, which are flat roofed, end terrace commercial units, were originally former public toilets that were converted in 2009/10. Since conversion both buildings have been occupied and used by Shopmobility, a charity offering access equipment for individuals with mobility issues.
6. The former lease under which Shopmobility occupied the Properties has now term expired, however the Charity continue to occupy the Properties on a temporary basis under a Tenancy at Will.
7. Shopmobility have informed the Council that it has ceased trading from the Properties and it is understood that the buildings are currently being used for storage of equipment pending disposal. The charity is considering its longer term future with the assistance of Officers including options for alternative accommodation.
8. The proposed land disposal presents the Council with an opportunity to generate a capital receipt inclusive of marriage value between the Council's asset and the adjacent land, whilst at the same time facilitating the delivery of a Town Centre regeneration scheme.
9. It is recommended that the Council dispose of the freehold interest in the Properties via private treaty. The estimated period for completion of the transaction is four months.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

10. Should Cabinet approve the recommendation set out within this report, it will be necessary to commission an independent valuation to evidence that best value

has been obtained for the purpose of compliance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Sale of the Properties by private treaty in the absence of a full marketing campaign is consistent with the Council's Contract Standing Orders due to the special purchaser status of the proposed buyer.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

Mobility House is included within a current planning application to re-develop Market House. The determination of that planning application will be undertaken in line with statutory process regardless of the decision of the Council in its role as landowner to dispose of this site.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

The Council will be disposing of a property asset as set out within the report. The actual sum to be achieved is not currently known and will be subject to the detailed evaluation to be conducted as part of the valuation report. The capital receipt generated will be held to support the funding of the council's capital programme in future years.

Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive

Housing

As outlined in the report.

Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

The sale of Mobility House and Mobility House Annexe will allow a more comprehensive redevelopment of Market House which will contribute to regeneration of Harlow Town Centre.

Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Governance (Includes HR)

The Council has the power to dispose of the land but must apply the best value principles as identified in the report above. If Cabinet resolves to dispose of the land the Council's legal department will ensure that due diligence is carried out regarding the title of the land and prepare the necessary legal documents to transfer the land.

Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Appendices

Appendix A – Site Map