

Agenda Item No:

Report author: Mike Ross

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**Report of:** Head of Land and Property

**Report to:** Director of City Development

**Date:**

**Subject:** West Leeds Family Learning Centre, Whingate Road, Armley, Leeds 12

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	Armley	
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

### Summary of main issues

1. West Leeds Family Learning Centre is a vacant building which was originally built as a school but most recently used as a family learning centre. The property has been declared surplus to operational requirements and is in the process of being demolished. It is proposed to sell it on the open market either by inviting informal offers by a date to be agreed or by public auction

### Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the West Leeds Family Learning Centre be:
 

Declared surplus to Council requirements, and

  - i) advertised on the open market by inviting offers by a specified date with offers reported back to the Director of City Development for consideration, or
  - ii) in the event of there being sufficient interested to sell the property by public auction. The reserve price to be agreed by the Head of Land and Property in accordance with powers delegated by the Director of City Development, prior to the auction.

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## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Director of City Development to declare West Leeds Family Learning Centre (WLFLC) surplus to Council requirements and to offer the property for sale on the open market by inviting offers by a specified date, or by public auction.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 WLFLC comprises a former school, as shown on the attached plan, which was closed in the 1980's and re-opened as a family learning centre in 1990. The centre was closed and declared surplus to operational requirements by the Chief Officer Democratic and Central Services on 15 August 2011.
- 2.2 The property was identified by Children's Services as a possible site for an extension to Whingate Primary School, which is located on the opposite side of Whingate Road, but this interest has now been withdrawn.
- 2.3 Due to the poor condition of the property which has been extensively vandalised it has been decided to demolish the buildings to leave a cleared site with low brick walls and railings to the boundaries. These works are expected to be completed by the end of September 2015.
- 2.4 The site measures approximately 0.3 Ha (0.74 acres) and is fronted on all sides by adopted highways. Vehicular access to the former buildings was from Conference Place to the west.
- 2.5 Informal planning advice and Technical Information will be included with the marketing details to guide potential purchasers which will indicate potential alternative uses for the site which is mostly likely to be residential redevelopment with alternative uses being considered on their merit.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The property has been handed over to Civic Enterprise Leeds to manage on behalf of the Council pending its disposal. Due to the poor condition of the property and as it constitutes a health and safety risk and a nuisance to surrounding residents it has been decided to demolish the buildings to leave a site suitable for redevelopment.
- 3.2 The property has been considered for alternative Council use and no future or alternative use has been identified for the property within the Council.
- 3.3 As there is no alternative Council use for the property it is proposed and recommended that it be declared surplus to Council requirements and sold by inviting offers for the freehold interest, with offers reported back to the Director of City Development consideration. Alternatively, if there is sufficient interest then the building should be sold by public auction with the reserve price to be agreed by the Head of Land and Property in accordance with powers delegated by the Director of City Development, prior to the auction.
- 3.4 Options relating to the proposal to dispose of the property are considered below:

1. Retain the property for Council use. This has been considered but no alternative Council uses have been identified and it is therefore not considered appropriate to retain it.
  2. Dispose of the property by inviting offers for the freehold interest by a date to be agreed, or by public auction.
- 3.5 It is recommended that option 2) is taken.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 Ward Members were previously consulted by letter and e-mail on 27 January 2012 and indicated their support for a sale of the property.
- 4.1.2 Further letters have been sent to the current Ward Members on 6 July 2015. Two Ward Members responded on 6 July in support of the sale with one of them making this support conditional on officers consulting local residents about the future of the site.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 The proposal has no specific implications for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- 4.2.2 Marketing details can be made available in large print, computer disk, Braille and audio cassette. They can also be made available in a number of languages.

### **4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The disposal of the site shall generate a capital receipt to support the Council's Capital Programme that covers a wide range of Council Policies and City Priorities.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 If the property is sold the Council will cease to be responsible for the current and future maintenance liabilities of the site.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 Under Part 3 Section 3E Paragraph 2(a) of the Council's Constitution (Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions)) the Director of City Development has authority to discharge any function of Executive Board in relation to the management of land (including valuation, acquisition, appropriation, disposal and any other dealings with land or any interest in land) and Asset Management.
- 4.5.2 The proposal constitutes a significant operational decision and is therefore not subject to call in.
- 4.5.3 The Head of Land and Property confirms that the proposed method of disposal set out above is the method most likely to result in the Council achieving the best

consideration that can reasonably be obtained under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (or under the Housing Act 1985).

- 4.5.4 Due to the time that has elapsed since the school was closed for that use in the 1980's, no approvals are required from the Department for Education to allow the Council to dispose of the property.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 Risks associated with the proposal to dispose of the property are considered below:
- 4.6.2 A purchaser may not be identified and the property may remain vacant for longer than expected. The proposed method of marketing is considered to be the most appropriate and thereby reduces the risk of a purchaser not being identified.
- 4.6.3 Offers may be submitted for unacceptable uses in which case the Council could not proceed to select a purchaser. This risk will be addressed by the inclusion of Informal planning advice and Technical Brief in the marketing particulars, which will guide potential purchasers in the preparation of their offers which would be acceptable in principle.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 As no alternative Council use has been identified for the building the proposal to declare the property surplus to Council requirements and offer it for sale should be progressed to generate a capital receipt in support of the Council's capital programme.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the West Leeds Family Learning Centre be:
- 6.2 Declared surplus to Council requirements, and
- 6.3 i) advertised on the open market by inviting offers by a specified date with offers reported back to the Director of City Development for consideration, or
- ii) in the event of there being sufficient interested to sell the property by public auction. The reserve price to be agreed by the Head of Land and Property in accordance with powers delegated by the Director of City Development, prior to the auction.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.