

Agenda Item No:

Report author: Mike Ross

Tel: 39 51479

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

**Report to:** Director of City Development

**Date:**

**Subject:** Site of the former 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. The site of the former West Leeds Family Learning Centre was formerly occupied by a school but most recently used as a family learning centre. The property has been declared surplus to operational requirements and the buildings demolished to leave a secure cleared site. It is proposed to sell it on the open market by inviting informal offers by a date to be agreed.

## Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Director of City Development gives approval to declare the property surplus to Council requirements and to sell it on the open market by inviting offers. Any offers received will be reported back for consideration.

## 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 the site of the former West Leeds Family Learning Centre (WFLC) surplus to Council requirements and to offer the property for sale on the open market by inviting offers by a specified date.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 WLFLC comprises a cleared site, as shown on the attached plan, formerly occupied by a Victorian school which was most recently used as a family learning centre. The Centre was closed and declared surplus to operational requirements by the Chief Officer Democratic and Central Services on 15 August 2011. Due to the poor condition of the property, which had been extensively vandalised, it was decided to demolish the buildings to leave a cleared site with low brick walls and railings to the boundaries.
- 2.2 The site 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 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.
- 2.4 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.

## **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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 were 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.
- 4.1.3 A public consultation meeting chaired by Ward Members was held on 14 January 2016 with local residents, other interested parties and Council officers in attendance. There was a clear preference expressed by residents that the site should be sold for residential development with a preference for owner occupation. This view was supported by Ward Members and reported back to the Armley Forum public meeting held on 19 January 2016.
- 4.1.4 The Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning was informed of the results of the public consultation on 2 February 2016 and had no objections to the site being marketed.
- 4.1.5 Ward Members were formally consulted by letter on 17 March 2016 and have confirmed that the land should be sold for residential use with a preference for owner occupation.

## **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 City Priorities**

- 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 building.

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

- 4.5.1 Under Part 3, Section 3E(g) of the Council's Constitution (Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions)) the Director of City Development has authority to discharge any function of the Executive in relation to Asset Management.
- 4.5.2 The Chief Officer Economy and Regeneration, Head of Asset Management and Head of Land and Property have authority to take decisions in relation to Asset Management as delegated in the Director of City Development's sub delegation scheme.
- 4.5.3 The proposal constitutes a significant operational decision and is therefore not subject to call in.
- 4.5.4 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).

## **4.6 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 information about the site in the marketing particulars, which will guide potential purchasers in the preparation of their offers.

## **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 site of the former West Leeds Family Learning Centre be declared surplus to Council requirements and advertised on the open market for residential use with a preference for owner occupation. Offers will be invited by a specified date and will be reported back to the Director of City Development for consideration.

## **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.