

Report of Director City Development

Report to Executive Board

Date: 17 July 2013

Subject: Derelict and Nuisance Programme Update, including the former Royal Park School and former South Leeds Sports centre

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. At its July 2012 meeting, Executive Board requested that an update report be brought back to it in June 2013 setting out progress on the Derelict and Nuisance Property Programme. Executive Board has also previously considered issues relating to the former Royal Park School and former South Leeds Sports Centre and this report also sets out proposals for the future of these sites.
2. The Derelict and Nuisance Property programme has now been operational for over a year targeting eyesore and nuisance derelict properties, run down town & district centre properties and listed or heritage properties that have gone into disrepair. The programme has been developed jointly across the two Executive Member portfolios covering Development and Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services. The number of properties included in the programme has increased as some suggestions by ward councillors have been incorporated and as a result of the public's response to press coverage. The target properties and sites are or those which are most complex to resolve and which require the co-ordinated approach offered by this programme. Other sites that have been proposed, but which are more straightforward to resolve or are not as prominent have been sign posted to individual services to deal with separately outside of this programme. Action is currently ongoing on 48 properties.
3. The programme has so far resulted in improved co-ordination of action which has allowed the Council to take strong and concerted action to deliver a number of visible

improvements. The target of 12 improved sites in the first year has been reached. Further work is expected to improve more properties over the next year.

4. The programme has been co-ordinated with other Council activities, including the Asset Review, and there is potential to identify opportunities for delivery of new housing on some sites through the proposed Housing Investment Land Strategy, which is proposed in a separate agenda item.
5. A number of properties included in the programme are owned by the Council and work is ongoing to identify long term solutions. South Leeds Sports Centre and the former Royal Park School are two such properties and this report recommends demolition of both of these.

Recommendations

Executive Board is recommended to:

- i) note the contents of this report and the progress made to date on the Derelict & Nuisance Properties Programme;
- ii) agree to the use of £100,000 of the previously approved funding to be used to fund dedicated officer time to the programme, with detailed approval delegated to the Director of City Development;
- iii) agree that officers identify sites and interests within the programme that could be suitable for development through the Housing Investment Land Strategy and consult with the Executive Members for Neighbourhoods, Planning & Support Services and Development & the Economy on these;
- iv) agree the demolition of the former South Leeds Sports Centre;
- v) agree to the demolition of the former Royal Park School and temporary grassing over of the site until a deliverable primarily public sector, affordable housing or community use is brought forward.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress made to tackle a number of derelict and nuisance properties across the city, identified following detailed work at locality level and prioritised for action by Executive Board at its February 2012 meeting.
- 1.2 The report highlights some of the achievements to date and changes to be made to cross-service working to improve the overall efficiency of enforcement activities within the programme. It also proposes a widening of programme scope to include the potential for acquisition of interests on a number of sites for the purposes of delivering the Housing Investment Land Strategy.
- 1.3 The report also seeks specific approval to demolish two council owned buildings, the former South Leeds Sports Centre and the former Royal Park School, both of which have been the subject of long standing campaigns to retain, but where no viable solutions have been possible for a number of reasons, despite considerable time allowed and efforts to bring forward alternatives.
- 1.4 This report is the product of joint working across the Development & the Economy and Neighbourhoods, Planning & Support Services portfolios.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In February 2012, Executive Board agreed to the allocation of a rolling capital allocation to fund work to deal with derelict and eyesore properties, ideally bringing them back into use at the earliest opportunity. This was followed in July 2012 by Executive Board supporting the approach to be pursued. This set out the Council's intention to take a strong and proactive role to deal with problem properties and the need to maintain pressure on owners until issues are resolved.
- 2.2 A number of these properties are in town or district centres, or in regeneration areas and have blighted neighbourhoods for some time. The impact of removing the eyesore or nuisance associated with these derelict or unkempt properties goes far beyond the individual properties dealt with, enhancing the economic and social well-being of the localities in which they are situated.
- 2.3 The programme is co-ordinated by the Regeneration Programmes Division due to its focus on regeneration priority areas and town & district centres, but brings together activities from Asset Management, Area Support Teams, Building Control, the Environmental Action Teams and Planning Compliance. Some of the services involved also have regular contact with the police and fire service, allowing actions to be co-ordinated with the work of partner organisations.
- 2.4 Initially the 'Top 10' problem properties in each of the three areas of the city were identified by the Area Leadership Teams in consultation with Area Committee Chairs. As the consultation was broadened the number of properties suggested for inclusion has grown and the programme now includes 87 properties.
- 2.5 The programme includes sites or buildings that are in Council ownership. Two of the larger sites in the programme are the former South Leeds Sports Centre (closed

in 2010) and the former Royal Park School (closed in 2004). In the absence of specific budgets to maintain these buildings as void premises the condition of both has deteriorated significantly whilst attempts have been made to find alternative solutions to their use. Both buildings are now prominent eyesores within their respective neighbourhoods.

3 Main Issues

Overview of Year 1 Activity

- 3.1 The full list of properties included in the programme and their current position is set out in Appendix 2. The programme's initial aim was to resolve the immediate derelict and nuisance issues associated with agreed target properties to reduce their impact upon the local community. The first year target of 12 properties or sites improved has been met. Work has however extended beyond this initial aim by seeking to establish longer term solutions for sites.
- 3.2 Sites within the programme have therefore been categorised as follows:
- initial issues addressed with a long term solution in place
 - initial issues resolved and longer term solutions have been identified or are being implemented
 - initial issues resolved but longer term solutions still need to be identified
 - actions ongoing to deal with initial derelict and nuisance issues
 - action not yet started
- 3.3 The starting point for addressing any property in the programme has been to engage and establish a working relationship with its owner as a pre-cursor to any formal enforcement action, as it is preferable to achieve the desired outcomes for a property in partnership without recourse to resource intensive and costly statutory processes. There have been some 'quick wins' as a result of this approach, particularly where issues have been less complex to resolve.
- 3.4 The following examples illustrate the range of challenges and achievements through this approach from the first year of the programme:
- 3.4.1 The Cottingley Arms (formerly the Sphynx Public House), Cottingley
The former Cottingley Arms public house was located in the Cottingley area of Leeds and formed part of the Cottingley Vale shopping centre. The vacant, dilapidated 1970s building was in the ownership of the council and had become the focus for vandalism, anti-social behaviour and graffiti. Leeds City Council worked with Aire Valley Homes Leeds to demolish the building and undertake a landscaping scheme on the cleared site. The demolition and landscaping scheme has been welcomed by the local community and members as it has helped to alleviate the anti-social behaviour in the area.
- 3.4.2 Former Petrol Station, Broad Lane, Bramley
This is a privately owned cleared former petrol station site located in Bramley with its frontage onto Broad Lane. The council own the freehold to an area of land to the rear of the site which is leased to the private owner of the frontage part. The petrol station closed in 2001, and when it was brought to the attention of the Derelict and

Nuisance Property Programme Working Group by local residents and ward members the site was in a very poor condition with assorted rubble from the demolition and overgrown vegetation. The boundary was made up of unsightly concrete rings and temporary fencing. The council's Planning Compliance team contacted the owner regarding the council's intention to serve enforcement action to tidy the site, which included removal of the concrete rings and securing the boundary with more permanent fencing. The owner responded by undertaking the works without the need for a notice. An agent for the site has been appointed by the owner and the council is working with them in partnership to explore roadside commercial opportunities.

3.4.3 The Whinmoor Public House, Whinmoor

This is a public house in the Whinmoor area of Leeds that the council owns the freehold to. The pub closed down because the previous leaseholder went into administration which left the building vacant and subject to anti-social behaviour. The council worked with the previous leaseholder's administrator to find a purchaser for the remaining leasehold term. A purchaser was found and the council met with the individual to discuss the terms for a new leasehold agreement whilst exploring opportunities for re-use of the pub building. The discussions were very positive resulting in a new leasehold agreement, with the building subsequently re-opening as a family pub.

3.4.4 The Lord Cardigan Public House, Bramley

This privately owned former public house is located on Hough Lane in Bramley, it currently has an outline planning permission for residential development. The building ceased operating as a pub a number of years ago and it had started to deteriorate. In January 2012 the empty building was left in a dangerous condition following a fire which caused significant damage. The Council's Building Control team contacted the owner regarding the council's intention to serve enforcement action to either make the building safe or demolish it. The owner recognised that the building was in a dangerous condition and it was demolished a few months later without the need for an enforcement notice to be served. The site was made secure by way of a bund around the boundary to prevent unauthorised use or access.

3.4.5 St. John's Church, Roundhay

The privately owned church is no longer used as a place of worship following its sale by the Church of England in 2010 following a fall in congregation numbers. The building has since fallen into disrepair with holes in the roof and dislodged masonry, the graveyard has also become overgrown. The poor condition of the church building was brought to the attention of the Derelict and Nuisance Property Programme Working Group by a local ward member. The owner was contacted by the council and an urgent works notice letter served which outlined the work to be undertaken to arrest the further decline of the building. The owner responded by completing the works over and above the requirements set out in the notice letter. The council will continue to keep in contact with the owner to monitor the progress in bringing this building back into use.

3.5 Despite these early wins in many cases it can become apparent that there is limited scope to make progress on basis of negotiation and partnership and that formal

action must be taken, where owners are unwilling to engage or not proactive in progressing agreed actions. In such cases the Council takes action in a transparent, fair and reasonable way reflecting the extent to which the owner has complied with requirements. Officers seek to maintain a line of communication with owners at all times in advance of any formal notice being served. Some cases have required absentee owners to be identified and traced.

- 3.6 The problem solving approach that has developed has naturally lead to a broadening of discussions towards identifying longer terms solutions, to avoid recurrence of the original problems following any successful enforcement action or agreed improvement works. In several cases this has resulted in dialogue with property owners to encourage and support consideration of site redevelopment or re-use of buildings. Delivering long term solutions will have the most impact upon neighbourhoods. In some cases, owners or developers are already progressing schemes, but in others there needs to be more support from the Council to identify options.
- 3.7 To assist this, soft market testing with potential developers is being undertaken by the Council to better understand the appetite to deliver both commercial and housing schemes on some sites. This will help the Council to facilitate potential land transfers and to work with owners with the potential to package a number of properties together for marketing purposes to maximise their attractiveness to developers and investors. This approach to securing development interest is subject to the willingness of owners to engage with the Council and any potential third party investors.

Links to Other Programmes & Services

- 3.8 The co-ordinated approach to identification and enforcement of problem properties initiated by the programme has greatly improved the level of cross service working across the Council to ensure that resources are used in a more efficient and co-ordinated way. This has been particularly beneficial in the case of the Council's various enforcement teams whereby the most relevant service is identified to take a lead, based upon the problems presented by individual properties. Facilitating a dialogue between services also allows approaches to be challenged, discussed and trialled as the Council puts more pressure on property owners to maintain or redevelop problem properties.
- 3.9 The approach could be stepped up to make an even greater impact across the city by allocating some of the programme budget to be used to pay for project management and dedicated officer time from Building Control, Planning Compliance, and Regeneration Programmes. The formation of a dedicated cross-service team would ensure that the programme is resourced on a continuous basis and more properties could be prioritised for action with longer term development solutions explored and progressed.
- 3.10 Joint working can be further improved and efforts continue to be made to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's resources. Action recording and monitoring approaches have been developed and refined as the programme has progressed and have demonstrated the benefits of bringing key pieces of

information together for joint consideration. The programme team is now looking at ways of further developing the recording systems to ensure that enforcement information can be held and shared between the various teams, which could have benefits for the city beyond the derelict and nuisance property programme. It is anticipated that progress can be made over the summer to implement such changes which will further improve the use of resources and evidence gathering.

- 3.11 There is potential to consider how sites identified through the Derelict and Nuisance programme could support the delivery of other service needs, particularly housing growth, affordable housing and schools planning.
- 3.12 A separate report on the Executive Board agenda sets out a proposed Housing Investment Land Strategy and a pipeline of council-owned sites for delivery of affordable, social and market housing. Council-owned sites in the Derelict & Nuisance programme have already been considered for inclusion in this housing investment pipeline.
- 3.13 The Schools Basic Needs Programme Board is also undertaking an ongoing review of Council assets to identify opportunities for school expansion or new school development in areas in need of new places.
- 3.14 Some sites in the programme are in Council freehold but are subject to leasehold interests. Where it does not prove possible to reach an agreed solution with the leasehold interests and where there is no third party development potential there may be value to the Council in seeking acquisition of the lease to gain full control of the site to create a development opportunity for its other programmes or service needs.
- 3.15 The nature and size of many of the sites may make them appropriate for smaller scale infill housing development - these will be reviewed and considered as potential inputs into the housing investment pipeline for development under the Council House Growth Programme or by affordable housing providers, subject to their interest. The cost of acquisition to the relevant programmes and ability of the Council or Registered Provider to fund this, alongside the appropriateness of the site to service aims would be critical factors in determining the suitability of each site for such purposes. Acquisition of sites in full third party ownership may also be considered, subject to the same cost and value considerations.
- 3.16 It is proposed that sites are identified in the programme that may be appropriate for such development and which meet viability requirements and approaches to the property interests in consultation with the Executive Members for Neighbourhoods, Planning & Support Services and Economy & Development.
- 3.17 For any potential acquisition of freehold and/or leasehold interests, the preferred scenario is that there is a willing vendor and some certainty of a scheme of re-use/redevelopment in order to progress. Where a negotiated purchase cannot be achieved and there is a compelling case in the public interest for acquiring a site to deliver a scheme, the Council may need to consider use of its compulsory powers. This would be dependent on demonstrating how the public benefit associated with the acquisition would justify the interference with individual rights, clarity in respect

of funding and viability, the acquisition powers and how any planning or other barriers to the delivery of the scheme will be overcome. As CPO is intended to be a 'last resort' measure, any case for CPO will need to demonstrate that all reasonable efforts have been employed to acquire by negotiation.

- 3.18 The Council is currently undertaking a wider Asset Review which will consider all Council owned properties across the city to determine which properties may no longer be required for delivery of services in future years. There is now a clear process through which sites that are no longer required for service uses are identified in advance and the decanting process is managed to reduce the amount of time that buildings stand empty. However most of the Council's vacant properties that are being tackled as part of the Derelict & Nuisance programme predate this way of working and have been vacant for some time or require a decision about their future. The two most prominent of these are the former South Leeds Sports Centre and former Royal Park School. The Council is working hard to reduce the cost associated with void management of its empty and disused buildings and seeks to progress demolition where it is clear that no alternative uses can be found, and where there is no market interest in particular buildings.

Former South Leeds Sports Centre

- 3.19 In August 2009, Executive Board approved the closure of South Leeds Sports Centre (if no suitable community group was identified) following the opening of the new Leisure Centre at Morley in 2010, where the leisure provision would be concentrated, along with John Charles Centre for Sport. It also approved expressions of interest being sought to transfer South Leeds Sports Centre to a community organisation.
- 3.20 In June 2010, Executive Board further approved the postponement of the closure for up to four months and noted the financial implications of so doing, so that a report regarding a proposed Community Asset Transfer could be submitted in that period.
- 3.21 At Executive Board in October 2010, the Acting Director of City Development was authorised to commence the closure of South Leeds Sports Centre in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and for the building to be secured.
- 3.22 Officers were requested to undertake further work with Tiger11 as the only party who had responded to the request for expressions of interest, in order to enable proposed Heads of Terms for a Community Asset Transfer to be developed, for further consideration by Executive Board in December 2010. The Acting Director of City Development was also authorised to enter into a 6 months exclusivity agreement with Tiger11 for the potential use of South Leeds Sports Centre.
- 3.23 Tiger11 formally withdrew its Expression of Interest, in November 2010. Informal discussions were subsequently held with one other party but these did not progress to the stage of submitting a Business Plan. Alternative uses have been explored but no other interest has been shown in the building as a going concern.

- 3.24 The building has since been badly vandalised despite best efforts to secure the site. Void costs on the property have been £120,000 to date. It is not considered possible for the Council to re-open the sports centre given its condition. This would require considerable investment in refurbishment estimated at £4.25m and there is no budget provision to run it as a sports centre – running costs were an average of £538,000 per annum during the last 2 years of it being open as a sports centre, with an average annual operational deficit of £326,000. It is also the view of officers that there is unlikely to be any viable interest from other potential users; it is therefore proposed that the most appropriate course of action now is to demolish the building. An estimated cost for this is £340,000.
- 3.25 In terms of future use following demolition, the former South Leeds Sports Centre site is in the Beeston Hill & Holbeck regeneration area and is near to the sites where 275 new council homes will be built as part of the Housing PFI. There is also existing significant demand for new school places in the area and the vicinity of the former sports centre has been identified for that purpose. Whilst it may be possible to build the proposed new primary school alongside the former sports centre building, the optimum place for the primary school will be near to the front of the site and the road and this therefore presents a good alternative use for the site.

Former Royal Park School

- 3.26 The Royal Park Primary School closed in 2004 at which time it was agreed that consideration would be given to a refurbishment to include some council services and community uses. A budget allocation of £1.5m was earmarked for this purpose, with the remainder of the cost (at the time estimated at £2.3m) to come from services planning to locate there. Unfortunately, a viable scheme did not come forward at that time. Since then the property has been marketed with a view to finding a private sector solution that could incorporate some of the community uses. These exercises have failed to identify a realistic and deliverable proposal.
- 3.27 Since its closure the condition of the building has deteriorated. A condition survey was undertaken in late 2012 and identified the need for a total refurbishment and installation of full new mechanical and electrical services. The total cost of these works is estimated at £2.7m plus fees and contingencies, which would represent only a basic refurbishment to bring the property back into use.
- 3.28 The Royal Park Community Consortium was formed locally in an effort by some in the local community to preserve the building, raise funds to support its refurbishment and find a use for the building that would be locally acceptable.
- 3.29 In 2011 the consortium, working with Leeds Ahead, considered a number of options although it is clear that the strong preference of the consortium would be for it to re-open as a school or for it to become a social enterprise including community focussed uses. Other uses considered included charitable use, health uses, demolition with a modular build community centre replacing it, and refurbishment or demolition for social housing purposes. The latter two were not considered acceptable by the RPCC.

3.30 Other options have been considered:

- the building is too constrained for refurbishment to modern school needs and is not well located in relation to demand for new places. There is also no free school demand in the area that could require re-use of the building;
- approaches have been made by agents acting for the retail sector and developers with an interest in student housing, but on the basis of demolition. It is known that there would be strong local opposition to such uses;
- an informal approach was made via a ward Councillor, from the Woodsley Rd community centre;
- the possibility to refurbish in order to combine a number of local public services, including the police and library services, though the scale of investment required in the building would not represent good value for money.

3.31 None of these options has been taken further and those that may be acceptable in community terms have not proved to be viable. After extensive review and engagement with community and investment interests, there is no viable option available that retains the building. Void costs on the property have been £41,000 to date, with the risk that the condition of the building becomes increasingly dangerous and costly to address, also leaving the Council potentially liable to any health and safety issues arising through unauthorised occupation

3.32 Demolition is now recommended as the most appropriate and cost effective course of action. This would cost an estimated £160k and would take 4 - 6 months to commission and complete, including securing of the site and laying it to grass. This would however be subject to planning approvals, completion of bat surveys and any mitigation measures that may be required, which would need to take place anytime between May-September.

3.33 The scale of the development potential and value of the cleared site needs to be fully established to enable a further informed decision to be taken on any re-use of a cleared site. This could include a new library and space for use by partner organisations, with possible community use and an extension to the park. However, this will need to be explored further to determine the need and deliverability of such a scheme.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 There has been a great deal of consultation with ward members to ensure appropriate properties are included within the programme and are effectively prioritised. This has included discussions with Area Committee Chairs, Area Committees and their appropriate sub-groups as well as with individual ward members who have raised concerns about particular sites.

- 4.1.2 Through an article in the Yorkshire Evening Post published in July 2012, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services encouraged members of the public to contact him about any land or buildings which were a concern. This resulted in over 20 additional properties being suggested, although some of these were not ultimately included within the programme as they did not meet the agreed selection criteria.
- 4.1.3 The Area Support Teams have taken on the role of providing timely updates to ward members about the properties included within the programme and the action being pursued. This has helped to ensure that ward members can respond to queries raised by the public about properties and allowed any concerns they have to be fed back to the programme's working group for consideration.
- 4.1.4 The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services and Executive Member for Economy and Development receive regular joint briefings on the programme.
- 4.1.5 The former South Leeds Sports Centre and Royal Park school sites have both been subject to extensive dialogue with local residents and ward members, with reports to Executive Board regarding options for their retention and re-use. The main body of the report details the work undertaken with the community in efforts to find viable and sustainable uses for each building.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration screening exercise has been completed for the Derelict & Nuisance programme which is attached at Appendix 3. This identified that the programme as a whole will improve social and economic wellbeing and that improvements will have a particularly positive impact on those with sensory or mobility issues. Consideration of such issues will take place in greater detail on a site by site basis as actions are undertaken.
- 4.2.2 There are no specific EDCI issues in relation to the proposal to demolish the former South Leeds Sports Centre and Royal Park school sites, both of which are unused.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The Derelict and Nuisance programme and proposals to demolish and facilitate re-use of the redundant sites at the former South Leeds Sports Centre and Royal Park School contribute to the delivery of a number of the City Priorities including Housing and Regeneration, Sustainable Economy and Culture, and Safer and Stronger Communities.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 In February 2012, Executive Board agreed an allocation from the capital programme for a rolling budget over a three year period of £500,000 (£200,000 in 2012/13 £200,000 in 2013/14 and £100,000 in 2014/15), to support the Derelict and Nuisance programme.

- 4.4.2 This was intended to cover any legal and professional fees incurred in progressing actions and to allow the Council to undertake works to private properties where owners have failed to comply with enforcement notices. If costs are incurred to progress enforcement action, much of this money is potentially recoverable either through legal action or charges placed on properties. The funding could also be used to improve Council owned land to ensure that the authority can lead by example.
- 4.4.3 The programme's successes to date have been achieved through:
- successfully persuading property owners to undertake works themselves which has been resourced through existing service budgets;
 - it has taken some time to identify more specifically works to be undertaken to Council properties, some of which will be picked up by other projects and services who are bringing forward schemes;
 - progressing action against private property owners to a stage that legal action and direct works can be undertaken is a lengthy process as the Council must ensure that it acts in a reasonable and measured way, but follows through on initial pressure. It is only now that some of the actions taken at an early stage are translating into on-site work being led by the Council.
- 4.4.4 It is proposed to use £100,000 of the programme budget to pay for dedicated officer time from Building Control, Planning Compliance and Regeneration. This will ensure that more properties are prioritised for action to resolve immediate problems whilst also exploring and progressing longer term solutions.
- 4.4.5 A full range of possible solutions for the existing buildings at the former Royal Park School and former South Leeds Sports Centre sites have been considered, including proactive work with social enterprise interests to secure viable, value for money re-use of both sites. After lengthy periods of discussions with interested community groups/social enterprises and related due diligence for each site, it is clear that such community-driven projects cannot deliver a viable business plan that would be required to give the Council certainty of anything beyond a short-term future for the sites in their current form.
- 4.4.6 The estimated demolition costs for the former South Leeds Sports Centre and Royal Park school sites will be offset in part by the future costs of void management – the sites have incurred £41,000 and £120,000 to date respectively. Cleared sites would provide an opportunity to consider re-use for alternative Council needs, in the context of Asset Review and securing wider cross-service operational efficiencies.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are a number of legal implications which arise from the programme and the actions taken, including the progression of enforcement proceedings and recovery of costs.
- 4.5.2 Where it may be considered appropriate to seek acquisition of freehold or leasehold interests in a site and this cannot be achieved by negotiation then the Council may need to consider the use of its compulsory purchase powers. It should be noted that there is currently no resolution in place to do so.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Possible medium to high-level risks related to the implementation and potential outcomes associated with the programme are:

- failure to rigorously progress actions in a co-ordinated and timely way may impact upon the ability of the Council to promote change and robustly defend the action which is taken. This is being mitigated through the programme management arrangements established and further improvements to the way in which enforcement teams work together, record and share information;
- unsuccessful recovery of funds from property owners reduces the potential legacy of the programme. This is being mitigated by assessing the likelihood of recovering funds prior to spending money and early involvement of Legal Services to support the recovery of any money;
- delivery of only interim improvements to properties and the failure to deliver long term improvements including refurbishment of buildings and redevelopment of land. Properties in both Council and private ownership are being promoted to developers, in an attempt to facilitate appropriate schemes. However, the current property market means that owners are struggling to identify viable schemes. Sites will also be considered for development through the Housing Investment Land Strategy, including the potential for new homes through the Council House Growth Programme.

4.6.2 The principal risks relating to the former South Leeds Sports Centre and Royal Park school sites are those of a continuing negative impact on local amenity and escalating void management costs as the condition of the buildings deteriorate, if they are retained without a viable reuse.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The Derelict and Nuisance Property Programme has improved the way in which Council services work together to deliver improvements to derelict and nuisance properties across the city. This has resulted in a number of properties where improvements have already been delivered, many of which have come about as a result of pressure that the Council has placed on private property owners who have subsequently improved their properties voluntarily.

5.2 The programme will continue to co-ordinate actions to place pressure on property owners to improve their properties through the use of enforcement powers. As well as resolving the immediate nuisance issues, the programme will also seek to identify long term solutions and the Council will attempt to facilitate delivery with owners and developers.

- 5.3 To help deliver long term solutions, the programme will make continued links with other Council initiatives to deliver the housing growth and affordable housing agenda as well as schools planning. Officers will consult with the Executive Members on the potential to acquire properties or sites that could contribute to the delivery of these priorities, within the cost and viability parameters of those programmes. To assist the Council may need to resolve to use its compulsory purchase powers.
- 5.4 Enforcement action is a lengthy process as it is important that the Council meets its statutory requirements whilst also acting fairly and reasonably. The programme has helped to increase the efficiency of taking enforcement action and ensuring that such proceedings are sustained through to conclusion.
- 5.5 The programme has greatly improved the level of Council cross service working to ensure that actions are progressed in a more consistent, proactive and coordinated way. Further improvements are proposed to ensure better recording and monitoring of progress which will have wider reaching benefits beyond this programme.
- 5.6 The Council's Asset Review process will in future help to reduce the number of Council owned properties standing empty by identifying much earlier which buildings are no longer needed, giving time to progress an approach to reuse or dispose of the property.
- 5.7 Following extensive review of options for the re-use of the former South Leeds Sports Centre and Royal Park school sites, no viable or sustainable solutions have been found. It is now proposed that both are demolished to reduce ongoing void liabilities and provide development sites for future service or other uses.

6 Recommendations

Executive Board is recommended to:

- i) note the contents of this report and the progress made to date on the Derelict & Nuisance Properties Programme;
- ii) agree to the use of £100,000 of the previously approved funding to be used to fund dedicated project management and officer time to the programme, with detailed approval delegated to the Director of City Development;
- iii) agree that officers identify sites and interests within the programme that could be suitable for development through the Housing Investment Land Strategy and consult with the Executive Members for Neighbourhoods Planning & Support Services and Development & the Economy on these;
- iv) agree the demolition of the former South Leeds Sports Centre;
- v) agree to the demolition of the former Royal Park School and temporary grassing over of the site until a deliverable primarily public sector, affordable housing or community use is brought forward.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ 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.