

Report of the Director

PROPERTY MATTERS

1 Purpose of report

This report brings together a number of property matters which members are asked to consider; some proposals have already been agreed in principle and now require full approval, and some are new issues.

2 Executive summary

The report puts forward proposals in relation to Croyland Hall and Abbey; the Tithe Barn; Swanspool House and Swanspool Pavilion; Doddington Road council car park; and car parks in Victoria ward. It also outlines an update in relation to the multi-storey car park.

3 Appendices

Note: all appendices will be exempt from publication because they contain information of a commercial nature.

Appendix 1: options in relation to the progression of the conversion of Croyland Hall and Abbey

Appendix 2: proposals for the Tithe Barn

Appendix 3: proposals for Swanspool House and Pavilion

Appendix 4: proposals for Doddington Road car park

Appendix 5: proposed disposals of car parks in Victoria ward

Appendix 6: position in relation to the multi-storey car park

Appendix 7: plan of Tithe Barn proposals

Appendix 8: plan of Doddington Road proposals

Appendix 9: plan of car parks in Victoria ward

4 Proposed action:

The committee is invited to RESOLVE to

4.1 determine the future of Croyland Hall and Abbey, taking into consideration the viability of the planned conversion, and the requirement to preserve the listed building;

4.2 agree in principle the conversion of the Tithe Barn and its annexe into one café/function room for lease, and seek appropriate planning permissions, subject to a future report on viability;

- 4.3 refer consideration of the regeneration of the Swanspool House and Pavilion site to the Town Centre Regeneration Advisory Group so that all options can be considered and a recommendation made;
- 4.4 seek planning permission for residential development on the council car park in Doddington Road before disposing of it at best consideration;
- 4.5 agree to seek planning permission for residential development on car parks 7 and 8 in Winstanley Road on the plan attached at appendix 9, before disposing of them at best consideration;
- 4.6 agree that car park 9 in Knox Road on the plan attached at appendix 9 be disposed of at best consideration to Wellingborough Homes to enable them to provide the scope for a larger development site in conjunction with the owner of the adjacent development land;
- 4.7 the position in relation to the multi-storey car park be noted, and a report be submitted to a future meeting.

5 Background

- 5.1 The council has approved an efficiency plan which was developed in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy to consider ways in which the council can either increase revenue income from its assets or reduce the cost of the operation of its assets. This, together with the proposal to set aside capital receipts to bring about those efficiencies was agreed by this committee in 2016.
- 5.2 Whilst there are a number of potential projects which the council could pursue to address the issues outlined above, a prudent approach has been taken to initiate those which can be managed with existing (or moderately enhanced) project resources; further projects are likely to require a development partner for which a procurement exercise will be necessary.
- 5.3 The majority of the proposed projects for which recommendations are outlined below are either identified in the efficiency report or – as in the case of several car parks in the Victoria ward – an issue which has remained unresolved for many years.
- 5.4 In addition to the efficiency projects, recommendations are also included in relation to the disposal of sites which will enhance the council's five year housing land supply position.

6 Discussion

- 6.1 Set out in the appendices are details of each area of land or property which members are being asked to consider. Discussion in relation to each piece of land or property, and recommendations in respect of each, are outlined in the exempt appendix and are primarily based on the need to maximise returns from property, reduce costs, and provide additional housing within the borough.

7 Legal powers

The council has full power to manage its property assets under the incidental powers in section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972. Furthermore the council has all the powers of an individual under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Accordingly it has full power to carry out the proposed actions.

8 Financial and value for money implications

- 8.1 Requirements for capital investment are outlined in each project, as are potential capital receipts for any sales proposed. In terms of capital investment there is no proposal for investment unless a business case has been put forward. Business cases will either demonstrate a cost saving, income generation, an improved facility for the borough, or a combination of the three.
- 8.2 The level of capital investment in these projects is likely to be significant and extend over a number of years. When planning the delivery of the schemes consideration will need to be given to the position on partial exemption for VAT. A breach of this level could result in significant costs to the council and will therefore be included as a risk in planning the project programme.
- 8.3 The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) may be used to support investment in some of the buildings mentioned. If so, this is detailed in the appendix.

9 Risk analysis

- 9.1 One of the greatest risks in respect of many of these properties is inaction. A number of the buildings are listed and, even “mothballed”; these are costing the council money in terms of maintenance and repair, but with no return which, in itself, presents an added reputational risk
- 9.2 Leaving listed buildings unoccupied is expensive as the council has obligations for their maintenance but – at present – no return on that investment.
- 9.3 Since 2011 the council’s staffing resources have remained significantly lower than in years gone by, so it is essential to undertake projects which can be run concurrently using existing (or moderately increased) resource. Any further major projects will either need to follow on or be the subject of an agreement with a developer – for which a procurement exercise will be required.

10 Implications for resources

Significant officer resources will be required to make these projects a success, but the need to maximise the council’s assets may be regarded as an appropriate use of such resources.

11 Implications for equalities, and stronger and safer communities

There are no direct implications for equalities, or stronger and safer communities.

12 Author and contact officer

Bridget Gamble, Director

13 Consultees

Liz Elliott, Managing Director

Julie Thomas, Director

Paul Burnett, Principal Property and Facilities Manager

Victoria Phillipson, Principal Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager

Vicki Jessop, Principal Housing Officer

14 Background papers

Proposals and reports from retained agents.