

**Report of the Director**

**PROPERTY MATTERS**

**1 Purpose of report**

To provide an update to members on the report submitted to the committee on 30 September 2020.

**2 Executive summary**

The report provides an update in relation to ongoing approved projects identified in Appendix 1.

**3 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Current projects.

**4 Proposed action:**

**The committee is invited to RESOLVE to**

**4.1 note progress with regards to the projects outlined in Appendix 1.**

**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 large scale 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 in Appendix 1 are either identified in the efficiency report or are outstanding issues which remain to be resolved.

- 5.4 In addition to the efficiency projects, some of the projects involving the development and/or disposal of sites will enhance the council's five year housing land supply position.
- 5.5 Given the planned changes to local government in Northamptonshire, the focus of this report is on the projects members have previously identified as priorities, and projects which can either be completed – or substantially progressed – whilst this authority is in existence.

## **6 Discussion**

- 6.1 At the meeting of the committee on 12 December 2018, a revised list of projects and priorities was agreed. These projects are now being progressed and project documentation is in place to better enable future monitoring. This is also assisting communication with regard to progress and the reporting, by exception, of changes and issues that require a steer or a decision. Officers have set up a project board to support the governance of projects. Reports seeking approval for key changes in priorities or projects will continue to be made to the resources committee.
- 6.2 A summary table including the current, previously agreed, projects appear in Appendix 1. These are updated monthly by the project managers. A number of projects are now complete and no longer appear on the list. This does not change the priorities previously agreed by members. However, it does ensure public transparency regarding how council resources are being used to invest in projects to improve Wellingborough.
- 6.3 A more robust project management framework and structure to reporting enhances this transparency and gives members a clear direction of travel on the progression of projects, and the use of resources, throughout the year.

## **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. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires councils to obtain 'best consideration' for any interest in land disposed of exceeding a term of 7 years. 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. Any new proposals for capital investment are processed by the S151 Officer for presentation to members as part of the capital report.
- 8.2 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.

- 8.3 Further investment in commercial property will be undertaken as agreed via the capital programme, to increase potential revenue income streams. An investment strategy for the acquisition of additional commercial investment property has been agreed.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) may be used to support investment in some of the buildings mentioned. The Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed that the scheme will now be extended until July 2020. Due to delays to projects caused by the Covid19 emergency this is now likely to be extended further to March 2021. The remaining projects are still progressing, but some were paused in the first stage of lockdown. Good progress is now being made on the majority of the projects.
- 8.6 The sale of 40 Acres of land to the north of Niort Way, Wellingborough for residential development has secured a substantial capital receipt that can be used to resource approved priority projects in the council's capital programme. The sale of the former drill hall and 8a High Street Wellingborough has been completed, contracts have been exchanged on the sale of the site of the former swimming pool at Croyland Road Wellingborough and contracts are due to be exchanged in the near future for the sale of 20 Sheep Street. These disposals are providing further resources for the capital programme.

## **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.
- 9.4 The delivery of property related projects, and particularly those involving the need for agreement with external parties, involves risks affecting the timing

and delivery of outcomes. Project management techniques identify and manage those risks where possible.

## **10 Implications for resources**

- 10.1 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. Recruitment to the Property and Projects team is complete with all post currently filled. Additional specialist resources are being procured on a project by project basis from external consultants. If additional permanent or fixed term resources are required to enhance the team a further report will be brought to the committee.

## **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**

Adrian Piper, Assistant Director (Corporate Landlord)

## **13 Consultees**

Liz Elliott, Managing Director  
Shaun Darcy, Director  
Eric Symons, Assistant Director  
Vicki Jessop, Assistant Director  
Karen Denton, Assistant Director  
Victoria Phillipson, Principal Property and Projects Manager

## **14 Background papers**

Documentation in relation to viability of potential developments.  
Correspondence with interested parties or contractors.

## Borough Council of Wellingborough Project Register Property & Projects - Current Projects

No. (Capital budget code)	Project Name	Priority	Summary	Project Manager/s	Project start date	Original Project/stage end date	Revised Project/stage end date	Project status (R/A/G)	Latest update November 2020
PP012	Drill Hall and 8A High St- disposal	Expedite	Disposal of site.	Adrian Piper, Assistant Director & Underwoods	Mar-18	Dec-19	Oct-20	G	21.10.2020 - A resolution to grant planning consent was made at planning committee on 12th August 2020. The sale was exchanged and completed on 27.08.20. When the S106 agreement is completed the redevelopment can commence.
PP013	Tithe Barn Office Block	Expedite	To refurbish the Tithe Barn Office Block.	Sanjay Chambers, Project Manager Property	Mar-20	Apr-21	Jul-21	A	02.11.2020 - Further surveys have been undertaken and estimated costs and timescales are currently being considered. Further work is being done alongside this to relocate staff to Croyland Hall and Swanspool House.
PP015	Multi-storey car park	Expedite	Work to refurbish car park.	Errol Browne, Programme Manager	Mar-20	Sep-20	Feb-21	G	06.11.2020 - The project is progressing well to the revised programme which was due to Covid 19. Levels 3 and 4 completed on 13 July 2020 and are fully open to visitors and shoppers to park. Works have almost completed on the toilet refurbishments and continue lower parking levels. We are on programmed to provide sufficient spaces for Christmas shopping.
PP018	43/44 High Street	Expedite	Bringing back upper floors into use.	Lee Clarke, Project Manager Property	Mar-18	Sep-19	Mar-21	G	06.11.2020 - Works are progressing on site and are on track to complete by March 2021.
PP021	20 Sheep Street - disposal	Expedite	Disposal of site with planning permission or for re-use as offices.	Dewa Hopson, Estates Officer	Mar-18	Dec-19	Sep-20	G	21.10.2020 - The contract for sale is agreed and the purchaser is undertaking due diligence. Contracts are expected to be exchanged shortly. Completion should follow soon afterwards.
PP024	Retail improvements - shop fronts	Expedite	Providing grants for shop fronts.	Brian Hawkins, Heritage Project Officer	May-19	Mar-21		G	10.09.2020 - Three grants have been awarded and others are being processed.
PP026	Street Lighting replacement	Expedite	Bulb replacement.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	Feb-19	Mar-20	Mar-21	A	06.11.2020 - Specification and procurement plan have been drafted to confirm estimated costs and timescales. Further discussion is going with NCC regarding the future of the assets post March 2021.
PP027	Greatwell Homes land rationalisation	Expedite	Agreement to transfer land.	Adrian Piper, Assistant Director and Underwoods	2017	Sep-19	Aug-20	G	21.10.2020 - the contract for sale was exchanged and completed on 24.08.20. Greatwell Homes have started local consultation on estate improvements and have sought pre-application planning advice. The Hemmingwell Skills and Community Centre will be granted a 25 year lease under the Community Asset Transfer policy and the freehold of the centre will then be transferred to Greatwell Homes.
PP033	Crematorium Green Infrastructure	Expedite	Design and delivery of pathways and gardens as the Crematorium.	Denise York Project Co-ordinator/Victoria Phillipson, Property and Projects Manager	Sep-19	Sep-21		A	6.11.2020 - Further tenders to be sought for gardens and other landscaping to review possible phasing.
PP036	Doddington Road Cemetery	Expedite	Provision of new cemetery plots.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	Apr-20	Aug-20	Mar-21	A	6.11.2020 - Contractors started the drainage mid October. Further budget requested to undertake full road and footpath works.
PP001 J037	Redhill Farm - Roads & Sewers	High	Get unadopted roads, sewers and cycle ways adopted.	Victoria Phillipson, Property and Projects Manager	2012	Jun-19	Mar-21	A	6.11.2020 - Minor works to be programmed by NCC and Balfour Beatty to undertake work to illuminated street signs etc in November to allow adoption.
PP002 (J100 & J151)	Wellingborough Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)	High	To provide grant funding to critical/key buildings, shop fronts and other buildings in the Town Centre for restoration and refurbishment.	Lee Clarke, Project Manager Property	2012	Oct-19	Mar-21	G	06.11.2020 - The Hind refurbishment is expected to finish December 2020, with additional grant funding requested due to delays. The Heritage Lottery Fund have agreed a revised end date for project of 31 March 2021. Final work, reports, shop front and sculptures are be progressed.
PP007	High Street Developer Procurement	High	To procure a developer for the High Street/Jacksons Lane site.	Victoria Phillipson, Property and Projects Manager	2012	Jul-19	Dec-20	A	06.11.2020 - Planning consent secured for original scheme. Keepmoat have received initial pre-application advice and provided some further financial information to enable discussions on viability and land price to progress. A report will be taken to resources committee on 16 November.
PP037	12-15 Oxford Street	High	Roof replacement of BCW property.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	Apr-20			G	06.11.2020 - Liaising with Underwoods to create a specification for this project. There has been some delay due to changing priorities.
PP006 (J153 & J143)	Bassett's Park Skate Park and Bassett's Close S106	Medium	Skate park facilities and other related facilities.	Raj Gill, Project Co-ordinator	2012	Mar-20	May-21	G	06.11.2020 - tenders for consultant to progress planning etc received and being assessed.
PP008	Tithe Barn - Public Realm	Medium	Open Space outside the Tithe Barn - Phase 1	Denise York, Project Co-ordinator	Nov-18	Nov-19	Dec-20	G	06.11.2020 - Phase 1 works are complete. Phase 2 and 3 being progressed detailed designs and quotes for specific aspects are being developed. A report on a possible water feature is being taken to Resources Committee on 18 November 2020.
PP011	Doddington Road development site	Medium	Disposal and redevelopment	Dewa Hopson, Estates Officer	Mar-18	Dec-18	Jul-21	G	21.10.2020 - Outline planning consent has been granted for residential development. Underwoods have been instructed to start marketing the site to find a developer.
PP019	BCW owned properties - flats over shops	Medium	Bringing flats back into use.	Sanjay Chambers, Project Manager Property	May-18	Dec-19	Jul-21	G	06.11.2020 - Planning application documents prepared and surveys being progressed to allow submission of planning applications.
PP020	Digital High Street	Medium	Identifying and implementing the options for schemes to improve the digital presence in the town centre.	Victoria Phillipson, Property and Projects Manager	Feb-19	TBC		G	06.11.2020 - There is an SLA in place ENC and additional staff appointed this will therefore be considered further. There is some delay with this due to changes in priorities re: Covid-19.
PP029	Croyland Gardens	Medium	Improvements to the public realm - connecting green space to the town centre.	Raj Gill, Project Co-ordinator	May-19	Nov-20	Jun-21	G	06.11.2020 - Tree removal, crown lifting and weed removal is scheduled for Nov 2020.
PP030	Office space review	Medium	Consider options for building use for staff.	Lee Clarke, Project Manager Property	Jun-19	TBC	TBC	G	06.11.2020 - Information is being collated regarding current need and what space is needed alongside the Tithe Barn Office block refurbishment and in line with Covid-19 guidelines.
PP031	Park Improvements	Medium	Improve the parks and provide better facilities	Raj Gill, Project Co-ordinator/Caroline Ridge	May-19	Apr-20	Jul-20	G	04.11.20 - Benches and park signs have been installed by Wnorse, new tenders have evaluated for the play areas the contract is due to be awarded shortly. Demolition of the old Eastfield toilet block is due to be undertaken in December.
PP034 E692	Castle Theatre Carpark	Medium	Improvements to Castle car park.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	2020	May-20	Dec-20	G	10.09.2020 - Discussion ongoing regarding the installation of electric charging points.
PP035	Castlefields	Medium	To improve the park.	Caroline Ridge, Project Co-ordinator	2012	Jul-20	Dec-20	G	21.10.2020 Bandstand repairs have been completed. New play area to be installed alongside the other parks in March 2021.
PP037	Operational Property Project	Medium	Delivery of projects to refurbish operational properties.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	May-20	Mar-21		G	09.09.2020 Works progressing as planned.
PP038	Croyland Abbey	Medium	Basic Refurbishment prior to Occupation.	Lee Clarke, Project Manager Property	Sep-20	Oct-20	Oct-20	A	02.11.20 - Work almost completed, some delay due to damp issues.
<b>Key</b>									
R	Project not started/at significant risk of non-delivery								
A	Project on hold/at slight risk of non-delivery or delay								
G	Project in progress and on target								

