

**PROPERTY MATTERS**

**1 Purpose of report**

To provide an update to members on the report submitted to the committee on 18 December 2020.

**2 Executive summary**

The report provides an update in relation to ongoing approved projects identified in Appendix 1 and provides a summary of key projects.

**3 Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Project register

Appendix 2 – Project summary

Appendix 3 – Doddington Road information (**to follow**).

**4 Proposed action:**

**The committee is invited to RESOLVE to**

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

**4.2 note the approved list of projects in paragraph 6.4 to be put forward to the North Northamptonshire Council.**

**4.3 dispose of the Doddington Road development site at best consideration in order to gain a capital receipt.**

**5 Background**

5.1 The council approved an efficiency plan which was developed in conjunction with the medium-term financial strategy to consider ways in which the council could 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 were several potential projects which the council could have pursued 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

- 5.3 The majority of the projects which were subsequently approved and prioritised were either identified in the efficiency report or were outstanding issues which remained to be resolved. Others were identified following the ongoing survey and review of property assets.
- 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 from 1 April 2021, the focus of this report is on the projects members have previously identified as priorities, and projects which will be put forward to the North Northamptonshire Council to be considered through their own approval and prioritisation process.

## **6 Discussion**

- 6.1 At the meeting of the committee on 19 September 2018, a revised list of projects and priorities was agreed. These projects are now being progressed or have been completed 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.
- 6.2 A project board supports the governance of projects. Reports seeking approval for key changes in priorities or projects will continue to be made to the successor authority, North Northamptonshire Council, as required by their processes and procedures.
- 6.3 The project register is in Appendix 1 with a summary table including the current, previously approved projects in Appendix 2. 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.
- 6.4 The following list of ongoing projects are approved, funded and will transfer to the North Northamptonshire Council programme:
  - Tithe Barn Office Block
  - Doddington Road Cemetery footpaths
  - Tithe Barn – Phase 1
  - Festival Lights
  - 12 - 15 Oxford Street
  - Retail improvements - shop fronts
  - Street Lighting replacement
  - Bassett's Park Skate Park
  - Doddington Road development site

- BCW owned properties - flats over shops
- Digital High Street
- Croyland Gardens
- Park Improvements
- The Castle
- The Embankment Phase 1

6.5 At the meeting of the Development Committee on 18 January 2021 the committee approved the following list of proposed projects to be put forward to the North Northamptonshire Council for consideration within their project selection and prioritisation process:

- Play areas – Phase 3
- Park improvements - Phase 3
- Road adoptions, structures, cycle paths
- Market Square
- Cycling strategy
- Church Street
- Norse SLA Review
- Public Halls
- London Road Cemetery chapels
- Q2 Booth Drive, Wellingborough
- Mausoleums
- Town Centre connections
- The Embankment Phase 2

6.6 Officers are now working on start-up forms and other project information to ensure that these proposed projects can be put forward to the new authority as soon as they can be considered.

### **Doddington Road development site**

6.7 One of the projects is the Doddington Road development site and following previous approvals to sell this site it was put on the market with Underwoods. A number of offers were received, and the committee is asked to approve the sale of the Doddington Road site for best consideration. The site was previously considered by Greatwell Homes who found it not viable for a social housing scheme.

6.8 The site currently has planning permission for 12 flats which the council secured, this permission runs out on 3 October 2021 to begin works, therefore significant works needs to have started before then to ensure the planning permission does not expire.

## **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 Existing projects are funded through existing revenue or capital budgets. The requirements for capital investment will be outlined in each project, as are potential capital receipts for any sales proposed. These will need to consider as part of the investment plan and capital programme in the North Northants Council.
- 8.2 In terms of capital investment there would be 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 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.

## **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 were vacant. These were costing the council money in terms of maintenance and repair, but with no return which presented an added reputational risk. This situation has now improved. 20 Sheep St has now been sold and will be put back into commercial use by the new owner. Croyland Hall has been occupied by Tresham College for two and a half years and it is now proposed to move council staff into the building while the Tithe Barn office is refurbished. Croyland Abbey has been put into repair and is now being considered as an option for service hub uses, so this risk has been substantially mitigated.
- 9.2 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) resources. Increasing the size of the property and projects team and the use of external contractors, substantially funded from capital has successfully managed this risk and progress has been maintained.
- 9.3 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 have been, and will continue to 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**

Adrian Piper, Assistant Director (Corporate Landlord)

## **13 Consultees**

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 February 2021
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	01.02.2021 - Minor works to be programmed by NCC. Balfour Beatty have completed the work to illuminated street signs etc.
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.	Caroline Ridge, Project Co-ordinator; Errol Browne, Programme Manager	2012	Oct-19	Apr-21	G	25.01.2021 - Work progressing to target and to budget. Evaluation report is being undertaken is being undertaken. Meeting and update to be provided to Heritage Lottery.
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	Sep-21	G	12.02.2021 - Phase one design consultation has closed, comments are being collated. Design workshop held on 11 Feb to discuss the design to allow planning documentation to be prepared.
PP008	Tithe Barn - Public Realm	Medium	Open Space outside the Tithe Barn - Phase 1	Denise York, Project Co-ordinator	Nov-18	Nov-19	May-21	G	24.02.2021 - Phase 1 works are complete. The next phase is being progressed. The trees have been removed and the cobbles are due to be removed shortly. New entrance quotes into Croylard Gardens have been returned. It is being proposed by the WTRWG that the water feature be considered by the Town Council. Further research is being undertaken to consider using the barn as a potential wedding venue.
PP011	Doddington Road development site	Medium	Disposal and redevelopment	Dewa Hopson, Estates Officer	Mar-18	Dec-18	Jul-21	G	04.02.2021 - Outline planning consent has been granted for residential development, the property matters report refers to this site.
PP013	Tithe Barn Office Block	Expedite	To refurbish the Tithe Barn Office Block.	Gerald Teirnan, Project Manager Property	Mar-20	Apr-21	Sep-21	A	04.02.2021 - Further surveys have been undertaken and estimated costs and timescales are currently being considered regarding the best way forward with the budget available. Further work is being done alongside this to relocate staff to Croylard 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	04.02.2021 -The project is progressing well with the majority of the work being complete and snagging progressing. The project has been/is being monitored by the Considerate Constructors Scheme and the reports are excellent or exceptional. A press release is being drafted regarding the opening of the car park.
PP018	43/44 High Street	Expedite	Bringing back upper floors into use.	Dewa Hopson, Estates Officer	Mar-18	Sep-19	Mar-21	A	17.12.2020 - Works are progressing well on site, discussions are ongoing with Western power regarding a date for improved power supply.
PP019	BCW owned properties - flats over shops	Medium	Bringing flats back into use.	Gerald Teirnan, Project Manager Property	May-18	Dec-19	Jul-21	G	17.12.2020 - Planning application have been submitted.
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	Ongoing	G	06.11.2020 - There is an SLA in place with 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.
PP024	Retail improvements - shop fronts	Expedite	Providing grants for shop fronts.	Brian Hawkins, Heritage Project Officer	May-19	Mar-21	Ongoing	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	Sep-21	A	14.01.2021 - Further discussions are ongoing with NCC regarding the future of the assets post March 2021 therefore this project will be delayed.
PP029	Croylard 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	12.02.2021 - Works due to start on site w/c 15 February 2021.
PP030	Office space review	Medium	Consider options for building use for staff.	Denise York, Project Co-ordinator	Jun-19	TBC	TBC	G	25.01.2021 - Information collated regarding current need and what space is needed alongside the Tithe Barn Office block refurbishment, in line with Covid-19 guidelines. SMT has approved the proposed relocation from TBOB to CH & SPH and these moves are being planned.
PP031	Park Improvements	Medium	Improve the parks and provide better facilities	Raj Gill , Project Co-ordinator/ Caroline Ridge	May-19	Apr-20	Jul-21	G	25.01.2021 - Improvement works are to be started shortly at Dale End painting and repairing steps etc possible delay due to weather. Pre-start meeting with Proludic for the 6 x new parks took place and start dates to be confirmed. Demolition of the old Eastfield toilet has been completed.
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	25.01.2021 - Tenders returned on 22.01.21 and are currently being evaluated before a contractor can be appointed.
PP034 E692	Castle Theatre Carpark	Medium	Improvements to Castle car park.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	2020	May-20	May-21	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	Mar-21	G	25.01.2021 Bandstand repairs have been completed. New play area to be installed alongside the other parks in March 2021. Lighting and footpaths to be looked into over the coming months.
PP036	Doddington Road Cemetery	Expedite	Provision of new cemetery plots.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	Apr-20	Aug-20	Mar-21	G	04.02.2021 - Drainage works completed, issues to be addressed with EA regarding discharge. Further budget approved to undertake full road and footpath works start date to be agreed.
PP037	Operational Property Project	Medium	Delivery of projects to refurbish operational properties.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	May-20	Mar-21	Apr-21	G	09.09.2020 Works progressing as planned.
PP039	Brooks and waterways	Medium	Improvements to BCW owned brooks	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	May-20	Oct-20	Sep-21	G	25.11.2020 - On site and work progressing to target and budget.
PP040	12-15 Oxford Street	High	Roof replacement of BCW property.	Adam Bracewell, Project Officer	Apr-20	Mar-21	Jul-21	G	04.02.2021 - Tenders received and being evaluated.
PP041	Embankment	Medium	Deliver phase 1 improvements	Raj Gill, Project Co-ordinator		Jun-21		G	27.01.21 - Solar lighting specification being finalised, park benches and picnic benches to be installed shortly, painting of diamond railing, bollards, height barrier to be started weather permitted, Signage designs being worked on.
<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								





**Project summary**

## Appendix 2

<b>Project</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>Croyland Hall and Abbey – short term letting</b>	Minor works undertaken to Croyland Abbey. Following a letting to Tresham Croyland Hall is currently being refurbished for staff relocation due to the works at the Tithe Barn Office Block.
<b>Wellingborough Homes land rationalisation</b>	Complete.
<b>Croyland Road development site (former swimming pool) - disposal</b>	Due to complete March 2021.
<b>Doddington Road development site – options</b>	This site is currently on the market.
<b>Drill Hall - disposal</b>	Complete and developer on site.
<b>Town centre car parking options</b>	Review of parking numbers completed -further update to be undertaken when required.
<b>London Road chapels - disposal</b>	On hold pending discussions with interested parties, however no active interest.
<b>Redwell Leisure Centre - review</b>	This project is being progressed by the community team and external consultants.
<b>The Tithe Barn</b>	Officers are having discussion with Historic England regarding the installation of windows/doors and looking at the option of enhancing this as a wedding venue.
<b>Homeless accommodation - options</b>	27 properties purchased to date.
<b>S106 projects, including town centre enhancement (H/M)</b>	Works taken place include relocation of the market, THI projects including the Hind Hotel and shop front improvements, works to the Tithe Barn open space as well as the refurbishment of several parks.
<b>Castle Theatre</b>	Ongoing, being progressed by officers in partnership with the operator.
<b>Crematorium</b>	Skylight installed, issues with cooling still to be addressed. Crematorium pathways and green infrastructure tenders received with contract to be place shortly.
<b>Multi-storey car park</b>	Works progressing to budget and timescales and due to complete February 2021.

<b>Asset strategy – disposal and acquisition</b>	Strategy adopted and most disposals complete or progressing. North Northants Council will develop a new asset strategy.
<b>Tender for management of the commercial property portfolio</b>	Complete.
<b>High Street/Jacksons Lane retained land</b>	Drill Hall and 8a High Street sold, decision on the other elements has been delayed allowing it to be considered by North Northants Council.
<b>Road Adoptions/Street Lights and Brooks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brooks work on site due to complete June 2021.</li> <li>• Streetlights on hold pending discussion to take account of unitary discussions.</li> <li>• Road adoptions - lighting work completed with final minor works to be completed by KierWSP as soon as possible, date tbc.</li> </ul>
<b>20 Sheep Street</b>	Sale complete.