

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 28 SEPTEMBER 2016

PROPERTY ASSET STRATEGY – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Summary

1. The Director of Commercial and Change has been invited to update the Panel on the progress of the Council's Property Asset Strategy which was approved by Cabinet on 3 March 2016.

Background

2. The approval by Cabinet in March 2016 of the Property Asset Strategy was an important step to further enhance its Better Use of Property programme and set out how the Council aims to do things differently utilising its assets more proactively for the benefit of the community.
3. The Strategy identifies a number of drivers from the analysis of future service needs which can be summarised as follows:
 - a) Rationalisation: Further rationalisation of services and associated property.
 - b) Growth: Some service areas will experience growth.
 - c) Integrated working: using fewer public sector buildings more intensively across organisational boundaries.
 - d) Maintaining long-term ownership of specialist operational assets: This makes sense particularly where it can be made available to a commissioned service provider.
 - e) Unlocking Value of Reused Assets and taking a more commercial approach: The opportunity cost in any business case for the reuse for service provision should be reflected.
4. The Vision of the Strategy is to support our services well, help shape the local economy and generate income for the council with a well-managed and dynamic corporate core. In order to deliver this vision the strategic goals from the property estate will be to:
 - a) Manage the property assets to ensure optimal efficiency of usage and effectiveness of support for the (front line) services being delivered from them
 - b) Influence and enable cross-public sector service re-design and integration through effective challenge and innovative adaptation of the accommodation
 - c) Achieve the maximisation of value from redundant assets and/or consider how they can support the local economy
 - d) Exploiting opportunities for generating revenue income from the estate to support our self-sufficiency agenda.

5. The Strategic goals will be achieved through a combination of:
 - Improving on what we have done before
 - Becoming more proactive in the redevelopment of redundant assets
 - Developing the One Public Estate Service approach to locality reviews at scale and pace.
 - Develop new leadership and governance through our Property Management Joint Venture Place Partnership Ltd (PPL).

6. The Strategy includes the County's Smallholding Estate and includes an approved set of management goals:
 - To manage the Estate to produce an ongoing revenue surplus either through direct rental income or by using alternative revenue streams from non-agricultural use.
 - To strategically improve the Estate by re-letting farms where appropriate, amalgamating farms to create more viable units and releasing surplus dwellings and buildings for sale.
 - To pursue the maximisation of the Estate's value by seeking opportunities for residential and commercial development through the local planning process.
 - To use the Estate to support the County Council's wider environmental and sustainability objectives by appropriate land management measures
 - PPL will explore the options for a solar farm and opportunities for sand and gravel extraction on smallholdings land.

Progress in delivering the Property Asset Strategy

7. There are a number of initiatives being explored and developed under the terms of the Property Asset Strategy as approved by Cabinet.

8. These initiatives include:
 - The Integrated Housing model – A project has been established to produce business cases to use surplus land and property assets to support meeting the Council's extra care, supported living and residential care demand with the benefit of enhanced capital receipt and /or additional revenue. The project includes exploring the scope and options to develop an Extra Care Village.
 - Accommodation for post 16 children – A search actively underway to acquire further suitable units to support the demand in this service area.
 - Integrating Public Sector Depots - Exploring opportunities and benefits from the County Council with other public sector partners sharing space, assets, resource.
 - A review has been commissioned to look at the long term strategy for County Hall
 - Continued delivery of the Better Use of Property Phase 1 and 2 disposal programme set to delivery capital receipts in the region of £20million during the period until 2019/20.
 - Development of a Phase 3 property list for disposal and/or income generation via a thorough portfolio analysis of the operational and non-operational estate.

- One Public Estate Place Reviews – a review of all public assets within a location carried out by PPL to identify needs/resources for sharing solutions to release surplus assets and exploit development opportunities. Redditch nearly completed with Worcester to commence in the autumn with Wyre Forest to hopefully follow shortly after.
- Sustainability and Transformation Plan – development of a combined estate strategy with the NHS and public sector partners and Herefordshire.
- Purchase of Wildwood - the way the public sector works now is significantly different to when the lease was originally signed and will continue to change over years to come. The Wildwood building demonstrates some great examples of where different public sector organisations work closely together for the benefit of residents. Our property portfolio needs to reflect such a resident centric, "whole system" approach to delivering outcomes by being flexible. Dependent on price, this potential sale provides such an opportunity.

9. Further opportunities are being considered which could see the expansion of the non-operational portfolio specifically to provide long term income generation to support the drive for self-sufficiency and to support economic regeneration. These include:

- Alternative development/disposal strategies including Private Rented Sector housing.
- Acquisition of commercial property for rent/regeneration

10. Place Partnership Ltd as a single strategic property and asset management company, of which the Council is a shareholder, will deliver a substantial proportion of the Property Asset Strategy. To compliment this new venture the Council has created a new client team and governance structure to ensure that not only are the services being delivered to the right standard but also to ensure the strategic objectives of this strategy are owned and driven. This organisation is 1 year old.

Purpose of the Meeting

11. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the update received;
- Determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny and in what areas; and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Commercial and Change.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and Minutes of the Cabinet 3 March 2016 which includes the full strategy are available on the Council's website at:

<http://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=131&MIId=1171>