



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 18th July 2024

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

13th June 2024 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Holland (in the Chair)
Councillors Brookes (substitute for Hasthorpe), Crofts, Humphrey, Lindley,
Wheatley and Wilson

Officers in attendance:

- Chris Fairbrother (Capital and Assets Programme Manager)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance)
- Paul Windley (Democratic and Scrutiny Team Manager)
- Sharon Wroot (Executive Director Place and Resources)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Harness (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets)
- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council)
- Councillor S Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport)
- Councillor Shutt
- Sam Fallowfield (Chartered Surveyor – PPH)

There was one member of the public in attendance.

SPTISH.1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

It was noted that at the Annual General Meeting of the Council held on 23rd May, 2024, Councillor Mill had been appointed the Chair and Councillor Holland the Deputy Chair of the Transport, Infrastructure and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Panel for the ensuing Municipal Year.

SPTISH.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from this meeting were received from Councillors Hasthorpe, Mill and Pettigrew.

SPTISH.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During consideration of item SPTISH.9, Councillor Wheatley declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as her employer was referenced in the papers. She left the meeting for consideration of this item.

Councillor Harness declared a non-registrable interest in item SPTISH.8 as he was related to one of the rejected bidders.

SPTISH.4 CALL-IN – FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF LAND TO THE REAR OF THE FORMER LINDSEY LOWER SCHOOL, BENTLEY STREET, CLEETHORPES

The panel considered a formal request from Councillors Bonner and Bright to call in the above officer decision.

The Chair noted that it was his intention for the panel to consider this and the following item together due to the similar nature of the call-ins.

SPTISH.5 CALL-IN – FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF FORMER COUNCIL DEPOT SITE, WEELSBY AVENUE, GRIMSBY

The panel considered a formal request from Councillors Bonner and Bright to call in the above officer decision.

The Chair invited Councillor Bonner to explain his reasons for the call-in of these two items.

Councillor Bonner felt that the land for both items should be utilised for social housing rather than a financial return. He commented that the council wished to enhance the quality of life of its residents and social housing would provide a genuine opportunity to make a real difference and kick start the regeneration of urban areas. He highlighted the benefits of social housing and felt that affordable tenancies would bring a long-term public benefit.

Ms Wroot provided the context for the decision she had taken under powers delegated to her by Cabinet. Mr Fairbrother further explained that the council was legally obliged to achieve best consideration when disposing of land and assets. The best way to achieve this was through open marketing and both sites had been on the market for some time. The proposals for both sites would involve an element of affordable housing, which would be dealt with through the planning process.

Councillor Harness, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets, was supportive of the decisions and noted that such receipts were important to deliver the council's transformation programme.

The panel were invited to comment on the call-ins and sought clarification on a number of points, including affordable housing requirements, land values and whether the council was registered as a housing provider.

The panel noted their intention to discuss commercial matters in closed session prior to reaching a decision on the call-ins.

SPTISH.6 CALL-IN – FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF GRIMSBY BUSINESS CENTRE, KING EDWARD STREET, GRIMSBY

The panel considered a formal request from Councillors Bright and Holland to call in the above officer decision.

Mr Windley read a written statement submitted by Councillor Bright, who was unable to attend this meeting due to prior holiday commitments. Councillor Bright explained that he had called this decision in due to there not being enough information to make an informed decision. He noted that the decision was originally delegated to officers by Cabinet when it was agreed to dispose of a number of property and land assets that provided a low commercial return and/or that were surplus to the Council's requirements. He further noted that the yield from the disposal was currently 11.3% with potential to increase to 14.8%. The true yield was likely to be much higher as the original cost to the council would have been much lower. Councillor Bright felt that these were reasonable returns and did not appear to fit in with the Cabinet decision to dispose of assets that provide a low commercial return and, given that the council now owned Freshney Place which was a similar commercial interest, he felt that it was also unclear how this could be deemed to be surplus to the council's requirements. The decision notice did not make it clear whether the rental return figures quoted were after all outgoing costs, nor did it provide details of whether the leaseholders paid a service charge that covered all maintenance and repair costs of the building. Councillor Bright sought clarity on the figures provided to see what the actual return was after all costs were considered.

Mr Jones advised the panel that it should consider moving into closed session if they wanted to look at commercial values.

SPTISH.7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public be requested to leave on the grounds that discussion of the following business was likely to disclose exempt information within paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Following exclusion of the press and public, Mr Jones advised the panel on options available to deal with the call-ins. Once closed matters had been dealt with, the press and public were invited to re-join the meeting to hear the resolution for each call-in.

SPTISH.8 CALL-IN – FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF LAND TO THE REAR OF THE FORMER LINDSEY LOWER SCHOOL, BENTLEY STREET, CLEETHORPES

The panel considered the closed appendices to the officer decision record for this call-in.

The panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters.

RESOLVED – That the officer decision regarding the freehold disposal of land to the rear of the former Lindsey Lower School, Bentley Street, Cleethorpes, be freed up for immediate implementation.

SPTISH.9 CALL-IN – FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF FORMER COUNCIL DEPOT SITE, WEELSBY AVENUE, GRIMSBY

The panel considered the closed appendices to the officer decision record for this call-in.

The panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters.

RESOLVED – That the officer decision regarding the freehold disposal of the former Council Depot Site, Weelsby Avenue, Grimsby, be freed up for immediate implementation.

SPTISH.10 CALL-IN – FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF GRIMSBY BUSINESS CENTRE, KING EDWARD STREET, GRIMSBY

The panel considered the closed appendices to the officer decision record for this call-in.

Ms Wroot and Mr Fairbrother advised the panel on the rationale for the decision.

The panel were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any matters. The panel felt that additional information providing the context for the decision would have been helpful within the

decision record and suggested that this be considered for future decision records.

RESOLVED – That the officer decision regarding the freehold disposal of Grimsby Business Centre, King Edward Street, Grimsby, be freed up for immediate implementation.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.52 p.m.