

## **Churchfields Offices, Disposal – Inclusion of public car park, additional information following decision of 11/12/19**

*Director:* Clare Pestell, Commercial Services & Income Generation Director  
*Manager / Lead Specialist:* Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager  
*Lead Officer:* Dan Bennett, Property Development Project Manager  
*Contact Details:* dan.bennett@southsomerset.gov.uk or 07971 111889

### **Purpose of the Report**

This report provides Area East members with an update regarding the possible inclusion of the public car park in the proposed sale of the premises. A report was presented to members in December 2019 that contained comments indicating views from Wincanton Town Council. This report seeks to correct that position presented and allow members to reconsider the decision made at the December meeting, with the benefit of up to date comments from the Town Council.

### **Public Interest**

Preparatory work was undertaken in summer 2019 by officers regarding the sale of the Churchfields site. At a late stage in this process the possibility of including the public car park within the sale was raised. A paper was presented to Area East Committee in December 2019 which contained comments regarding the views of Wincanton Town Council. Unfortunately the views contained within the paper did not reflect the formal position of the Town Council. Following a meeting of the Town Council on January 13<sup>th</sup> the Town Council advised that they do not support the disposal of the public car park.

### **Recommendations**

- (1) Members are invited to note the situation regarding the public car park and the representation of views from Wincanton Town Council
- (2) Members are asked to reconsider the decision as to whether the public car park land should be included in the property disposal.

### **Background**

At the Area East Committee meeting on 16 January 2020, Members resolved to revisit the decision taken by them on 11 December as the Wincanton Town Council had not provided a formal consultation response to the proposal. The Council's Constitution allows this in Part 4 - Rules of Procedure (Standing Orders) where it says:-

#### **15.1 Motion To Rescind A Previous Decision**

A motion or amendment to rescind a decision made at a meeting of Council within the past six months cannot be moved unless the notice of motion is signed by at least one third of the Members of the Council.

23.1 All of the Council Rules of Procedure apply to meetings of Full Council. All the Rules of Procedure shall also apply to meetings of committees including the Area Committees and Sub-Committees with the exception of Rules 8 and 20.1 and rules relating to public speaking. See public participation protocol at Part 5 of this Constitution.

At the Area East Committee meeting on 16 January 2020, Members voted by 10 votes in favour and 1 abstention to revisit the decision. This was also confirmed by them in writing subsequent to the meeting.

## **Disposal of public car park**

From an asset management perspective, it is appropriate to recognise that the land used as public car parking could be combined with the Churchfields property and offered for sale for redevelopment. Inclusion of the public car park would bring three main benefits to the Council:

- 1) That the inclusion of the additional land would substantially enhance the saleability of the property
- 2) That the capital receipt achieved from the sale would be significantly higher if the public car park was included.
- 3) That the revenue costs currently incurred by the Council, and presently the compensation cost to be borne by Wincanton Town Council for this site would be ended.

If the car park land is to be redeveloped in the foreseeable future, the optimum point for this sale is in conjunction with the Churchfields property.

*'Informal contact between the Property Team and Wincanton Town Council regarding the public car park highlighted a view that the increased potential capital receipt should be given weight, bearing in mind that the car park does not directly serve the town centre parking need but rather provides additional parking space for immediate local residents, many of whom already benefit from extensive off street parking.'*

**Following representation from the Town Council, it was advised the comments above (in italics) did not correctly represent the views of the Town Council.**

**Wincanton Town Council have now advised that they do not support the disposal of the public car park and that they wish the decision of the December Area East committee to be reconsidered.**

## **Conclusions**

The disposal of the Churchfields offices provides us with an opportunity to generate a significant capital receipt which may become available to the Wincanton Regeneration Scheme.

Inclusion of the public car parking land would increase the contribution in terms of new housing and boost the capital sum that may be available for regeneration purposes. It would reduce the amount of parking for existing immediate local residents, but many already have off street parking at their property and there would be some residual council owned off street parking. It may be expected that some local residents would suffer adverse consequences by the removal of this parking facility. It is also possible that some residents might prefer a situation where homes have replaced this car park. No residents views were directly expressed at the December Area East committee.

The Property Team are expected to commence marketing activities as soon as possible to minimise liabilities to SSDC from the vacant property.

The Property Team support the inclusion of the car park land due to the benefits outlined above, however we do recognise that the loss of 38 parking spaces will have an impact at a local level.

Given the potential impacts and the revised position of the Town Council members may wish to debate the merits of the inclusion of the public car park and potentially reconsider their earlier decision.

Fig 1 – site plan. Public car park shown edged blue.



## Financial Implications

The inclusion of the additional land within the Churchfields disposal would increase the value of the capital receipt by circa £250,000. This enhanced capital receipt may be made available for the Wincanton regeneration project.

The removal of the car park from the Wincanton portfolio has two financial implications:

- i) A reduction in business rates and maintenance & repair liabilities
- ii) A modest reduction in the compensation payment received from the Town Council, which would be circa 20% of the overall annual payment.

For information the current compensation to be received from the Town Council from April 2020 is circa £25,000, and the likely reduction would be in the region of £5,000. As the compensation arrangements are currently being renegotiated these figures are included as a guide only.

## Council Plan Implications

This project links to the Council plan under the heading of 'Protecting Core Services'. To ensure a modern, efficient and effective council that delivers for its communities, we will:

- Provide high quality cost effective services and transform customer services through technology.

- Take a more commercial approach to become self-sufficient financially.
- Develop a more cohesive and ambitious, economically efficient organisation.

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

No implications are identified as a result of the recommendations in this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

No implications are identified as a result of the recommendations in this report.

### **Background Papers**

District Executive - March 2018 – disposal of Area Offices.

Area East Committee - December 2019 - Churchfields Offices, Disposal – Inclusion of public car park

---