

DECISION RECORD

Decision Maker: Cabinet
Subject of Decision: Final Land Disposal Notice
Purpose of Decision: The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's determination as to whether or not to proceed with a request to disposal of a potential development site in Wisbech together with the associated access route.
<p>Decision Taken:</p> <p>Cabinet considered the report and RESOLVED to pursue OPTION 1 which was to retain the Land and the Additional Land and not to enter into any disposal or further negotiations at this time acknowledging the economic implications and strategic significance of the site. In conjunction with this, Cabinet requested that officers provide the organisation requesting the sale with ongoing assistance in identifying opportunities for expansion within the District.</p>
<p>Reason for the Decisions:</p> <p>Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides Fenland District Council with wide and almost unfettered powers to determine whether or not to dispose of land within its ownership subject only to the caveat that where such a sale is to take place, it should be for the 'best value' achievable. In this instance taking into account factors such as the following, members exercised their discretion not to proceed with any further negotiations at this time due to concerns that best value would not be achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The proposed sale price;- The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors report that demand for industrial property was, in the quarter ending June 2020, at an eight-year low - almost certainly due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 and the final Brexit negotiations. These effects will be relatively short term therefore Members considered against disposing of industrial land on the basis of any valuation which may be temporarily depressed because of the short-term effects of COVID-19 and Brexit uncertainties;- The site is a strategic site, being the last remaining 'serviced' employment land site owned by the Council which is accessible without significant further infrastructure investment.- Likely increases in land values should Wisbech Rail go ahead and when the A47 improvements finally occur.- The ambitions of the Council, through the current revision of the Local Plan and the Council's own Commercial & Investment Strategy, including Fenland Future Ltd, need to be taken into account when considering what capital sum (or, perhaps more relevant, what revenue stream) this site may generate in future with fuller consideration of all available options. <p>Secondary considerations also included the immediate effect on employment in Wisbech and the ability of the organisation requesting the disposal to expand; the Council's relative lack of urgency in needing to generate short-term capital receipts; the recent motions at Full Council and the potential impact this site may have in any other relevant manner.</p> <p>Cabinet members did take into account representations that the organisation had put forward in support of the sale and acknowledged both its growth aspirations and ongoing contribution to the local economy and job market. Consequently, Members made a specific request to officers that they provide continued assistance to the organisation in identifying alternative opportunities for development.</p>
Alternative Options Considered (if appropriate):

To enter into further negotiations with the organisation requesting the disposal with a view to negotiating and agreeing final terms of sale.

Interests and Nature of Interests Declared:
None

Background/Reports/Information considered:
Report determined to be exempt in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

Date: 8 October 2020

Please forward to Democratic Services upon completion

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Democratic Services**

**Implementation Date: 21 October 2020
(if not called-in)
(Allow 5 clear working days after publication
of decision)**

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