



AGENDA ITEM: 6(a)

CABINET: 16th September 2014

Report of: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor A. Fowler

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SUBJECT: STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress of the Strategic Asset Management Project and to advise on the outcomes of the Rufford and Aughton Park ward; to inform Members of the updated consultation process; and to seek approval to appraise the assets within the remainder of the Wards.
- 1.2 To update Members of and seek authorisation to dispose of a site located at Gillibrands Industrial Estate, Skelmersdale.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the contents of the report, including the work undertaken by officers to date, and the progress on the assets previously identified for disposal be noted.
 - 2.2 That the Ward Mapping Delivery Plan as set out in Appendix C is adopted and used by officers to map the remainder of the wards in the Borough.
 - 2.3 That the Member consultation process illustrated in Appendix D be noted.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Strategic Asset Management Project commenced in September 2010. The purpose of the project is to scrutinise all the Council's property assets, challenge the reasons for holding them and, if appropriate, produce a disposal strategy which will maximise the capital receipt for the Council. Each individual asset within the Council's property portfolio is reviewed and a comprehensive appraisal form is completed for each one. The appraisal forms are used to inform the Asset Management Action Plan, which in turn assists the decision making process as informed by existing delegations. Any proposed acquisitions or disposals exceeding the delegation limit are referred to Cabinet for a decision. To date asset reviews have been completed for the following wards:

Burscough West	Ashurst
Knowsley	Parbold
Wrightington	Digmoor
Birch Green	Scarisbrick
North Meols	Aughton & Downholland
Newburgh	Derby
Skelmersdale North	Scott

3.2 Some of the assets have development potential and, where appropriate, planning applications have been submitted to secure their enhanced value. To ensure there is no delay in marketing sites with an enhanced value anticipated to exceed the current delegation level of £20,000, authorisation for disposal has been sought as each ward is referred to Cabinet.

3.3 As detailed in the November 2013 Cabinet report, at the start of August 2013 the full time Graduate Planner Post was vacated. This position worked primarily on the SAMP. At the start of January 2014 the part time Principal Planning Officer post was also vacated leaving just one full time officer within the Regeneration Team. A Senior Planning Officer post was created and the post filled at the end of April 2014. Given the slippage that had occurred with the SAMP it was decided that a new Ward Mapping Delivery Plan should be created to reflect current workloads and staff resources (Appendix C).

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Rufford ward has a small number of Council owned assets, requiring the assessment of only 12 sites. The results are set out in Appendix A. Members will note that all sites have been identified as category 3 to be retained.

4.2 Similarly the Aughton Park ward required the assessment of only 10 sites as set out in Appendix B. Members will note that all sites have been identified as category 3 to be retained.

4.3 Since the November 2013 Cabinet Meeting, work has been continuing on sites previously approved for disposal. This can be summarised as:

- The sales of sites are near completion at Trevor Road in Burscough, Park Avenue in Ormskirk and Hoole Lane in Banks

- The sale of a site at Churchfields in Ormskirk has recently been completed.
- A site at Elmers Green Lane in Skelmersdale is currently being re-marketed.
- Work is continuing on the submission of Planning Applications at sites throughout the Borough and one has recently been submitted for residential development at a site on Sephton Drive in Scott ward.

- 4.4 The main changes to the Delivery Plan are the timescales now proposed to complete this exercise. Originally the Plan covered the time period January 2012 to December 2014. This has been extended by two years. This is in the main due to two members of staff now working on the project as opposed to three, along with the period of time when the SAMP was put on hold to allow other projects such as the Employment Area Remodelling Assessment, Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy and Garage Strategy to be progressed. Looking ahead to future projects and strategies along with the continuing current work involvement, it is considered that the additional two years is realistic and achievable. The order in which the Wards are to be mapped has not been altered. The only exception to the original Plan in these terms is Tanhouse. This was omitted from last year's programme as it is a large Ward with over 100 assets and only one Officer was working on the SAMP. The decision was taken to undertake the mapping of the two following Wards, Rufford and Aughton as they are considerably smaller in asset numbers and this allowed the Delivery Plan to stay as close to target as possible. Prior to the mapping of Wards recommencing, Officers will spend two months undertaking a broad sweep of all remaining Wards to ascertain if there are any "easy win" windfall sites that can be brought forward in a more timely fashion as opposed to waiting until the Ward within which the asset sits is appraised as a whole. This will potentially allow for any capital receipt income to be maximised at an earlier opportunity. Details of any such windfall sites will be reported back to Cabinet as appropriate.
- 4.5 Whilst the mapping of the wards was put on hold the opportunity was taken to review at and revise the notification process by which Ward Councillors and internal colleagues are notified and consulted on the Ward currently being appraised. The new process (Appendix D) is intended to involve Ward Councillors in greater depth at an early stage of the process. This is in terms of seeking opinions on assets and also proposals for development. It is anticipated that this additional consultation and involvement will greatly aid Officers and help in the process of determining which sites are suitable for disposal or alternative uses. It is also hoped that this early involvement with Members in the process will allow Officers to gain background knowledge on particular issues or problems within the Wards e.g. an area of land which regularly suffers from fly tipping could be looked at for disposal to solve the issue. Without the history of the site Officers may well not be aware of any problems and it is for this reason the increased interaction and discussion with Members is essential.
- 4.6 After a ward has been fully appraised it is proposed to discuss the findings and proposals with the Portfolio Holder and then Ward Councillors to ensure that there is agreement on the Categorisation of assets. Finally, prior to Planning Permission being sought on any site, further discussions will take place again with the Ward Councillors. This is in the main to gain the views and opinions of Members and also, where possible, local residents.

4.7 Overall it is considered that the new notification process will greatly improve the delivery of the Ward Mapping Plan, in terms of sharing background and historic knowledge of sites, particular issues within Wards and also delivering disposal and development opportunities in line with the key aims and purpose of the SAMP.

4.8 As previously reported, there will also be 'opportunity sites' when sites outside the wards being reviewed, require consideration e.g if an enquiry to purchase is made. Rather than lose a potential capital receipt, such sites will be considered alongside, and in a similar manner to, the wider programme of Asset Management. One such site is Garnett Place, which is an unused section of land that runs between two industrial units on Gillibrands Industrial Estate in Skelmersdale (See Appendix E). The Council has been approached by an individual wishing to purchase this land. Although a cycle path currently runs across this site, the prospective purchaser has agreed to pay for the cost of diverting this cycle path and is aware that the new path will need to be fully opened before the sale completes. As such, this site can now be considered for disposal and has been identified as a category 1 site.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 Appendices A and B set out recommendations for all the sites in the Rufford and Aughton Park wards.

5.2 Officers will continue to spend time working on the assets previously identified within wards to progress to pre-application and planning application stages.

5.3 In accordance with the newly agreed Ward Mapping Delivery Plan, the next ward to be considered is Tanhouse.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPACTS

6.1 The outcomes of the Strategic Asset Management Project and the nature of any schemes that come out of this project will ultimately ensure a number of key objectives of the Community Strategy are met, including affordable housing, young and older people, the economy and jobs and better environment, plus cross cutting themes such as reducing deprivation in our communities.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Cabinet will be aware that there are potential dangers of flooding the market if all the potential sites are released within a single location at one time and as such the Estates and Valuation Manager has been determining a timely release process which will ensure that best value is realised whilst producing a steady stream of capital receipts. To secure sales, all possible mediums have been utilised, including the Council's web site.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 As previously reported, the project has demonstrated that many of the assets held by the Council have the potential for development or for being utilised in a different way. If this potential is realised, their value will be significantly enhanced either financially or as benefit to the community. There will be opportunities in some cases to generate capital receipts from their disposal. If the assets are not considered in a timely fashion, taking into consideration other development such as Skelmersdale Town Centre project, this could represent a significant loss of capital receipts for the Council or the reduction in value if a successful adverse possession claim is made by a third party.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 It is important to continue to roll out the Strategic Asset Management Project across the Borough to enable all assets to be identified and assessed, but equally officers need to spend time working on assets categorised as 1 for pre-applications and planning applications. The project will ultimately ensure the asset register is fully up to date and the ownership of all the assets is challenged to determine those that are suitable for further development are identified and progressed.

Background Documents

West Lancashire Strategic Asset Management Plan, which is available at:
www.westlancs.gov.uk/living_in_west_lancs/regeneration_projects/action_plans.aspx

Equality Impact Assessment

The previous Equality Impact Assessment undertaken for the Cabinet report prepared for the September 2010 meeting will suffice for this report as the content of the project remains the same.

Appendices

- Appendix A - Rufford asset recommendations
- Appendix B – Aughton Park asset recommendations
- Appendix C – Previously approved and proposed Ward Mapping Delivery Plan
- Appendix D – Proposed notification process
- Appendix E – Land at Garnett Place, Skelmersdale