

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
5 December 2017

Subject: **POSSIBLE ACQUISITION OF COMMUNITY ASSET**

All Wards
Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development: Councillor P R Wilkinson

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval to negotiate to acquire the former Lambert Memorial Hospital and Health Centre in Chapel Street, Thirsk and to investigate the business case for Council acquisition.
- 1.2 The property ceased providing medical services to Sowerby, Thirsk and neighbouring communities in 2015. The property consists of the former hospital premises and its curtilage as shown edged in red on the plan at Annex 'A'. The buildings have an internal area of 971 sqm (10,452 sq ft) and the whole site is 0.21 hectares. The property is owned by NHS Property Services. The property sits between two GP practices, the Lambert Medical Centre and Thirsk Doctors' Surgery.
- 1.3 Closure has raised concerns locally that the potential of the building to meet the social and health needs of the local community will be lost at a time when demands are increasing and existing facilities are under pressure. The proposed investigation will consider whether there are viable social, health and community uses. Equally there may be economic uses such as workspace, retail or specific types of housing that would also benefit the community. These will also be investigated.
- 1.4 The Chief Executive has written to NHS Property Services to ask that it considers treating the Council as a preferred bidder to allow the Council the opportunity to negotiate the possible purchase of the Site. This will include sufficient time to complete the investigation of potential uses.
- 1.5 The investigation will need to consider whether there is a business case for Council investment as required by the new Commercial Strategy to be considered by Council on 12 December 2017.
- 1.6 The outcome of the investigation and negotiation will be reported to Cabinet which will then make a decision on whether to purchase the property.

2.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

- 2.1 This acquisition by the Council would accord with the Council's Economic Development Strategy and the Council's draft Commercialisation Strategy and link to three of the Council's four priorities; driving economic vitality, enhancing health and wellbeing and providing a special place to live.

3.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

- 3.1 There are no significant risks associated with the report with the recommendations which at this stage concern negotiation and investigations.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 The financial implications of acquisition will be dealt with in any subsequent report as this is dependent on the outcome of the investigation and negotiations.
- 4.2 Expert commercial and valuation advice will be required as part of the investigation and the cost of this is estimated to be between £10,000 and £15,000.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 In accordance with section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has the power to acquire land by agreement for the benefit, improvement or development of its area.
- 5.2 The Council is dealing with a nomination under the Community Right to Bid from the League of Friends of the Lambert Hospital, a local charity. The eligibility of the nomination is being checked as to whether it meets the definition of community value as set out in Section 88 of the Localism Act 2011. The nomination does not impact on the recommended course of action.
- 5.3 Legal and valuation advice will be sought as necessary throughout the process.

6.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity issues associated with this report. However, these will be considered in any future redevelopment.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 7.1 It is recommended that:-
- (1) Cabinet authorises the Chief Executive to negotiate the possible purchase of the Lambert Memorial Hospital;
 - (2) an investigation be undertaken of potential uses of the building which would benefit the social and economic wellbeing of Sowerby, Thirsk and the surrounding community;
 - (3) authorisation be given to spend up to £15,000 on expert commercial and valuation advice;
 - (4) a further report including an appropriate business case be brought back to Cabinet for a decision on acquisition.

DR JUSTIN IVES

Background papers: None.

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