

ASSET POLICY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6th January, 2016

Present:- John Sellgren – in the Chair

Councillors Huckfield, Loades, Reddish, Shenton, Tagg, Turner and Williams

1. **APOLOGIES.**

There were no apologies.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

4. **CONFIRMATION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE.**

Resolved: That the revised draft terms of reference for the Assets Policy Committee be agreed.

5. **REVIEW OF THE SITES FOR DISPOSAL.**

The chair welcomed representatives from Cushman and Wakefield to the meeting who provided a presentation to the Committee in relation to the site schedule which had previously been distributed to members (on a strictly confidential basis to be used solely for the purposes of the Committee's work).

The representatives stated that the majority of sites had been valued assuming residential development and that sites consisting of over 15 units would trigger an affordable housing and Section 106 agreement requirement.

None of the valuations included abnormal costs such as decontamination or access costs because this information was not available.

The query was raised as to whether it would be best for the Council to release, say, 3 sites per year. The representative agreed that this would be their advice and to achieve a reasonable geographical spread to avoid flooding the market.

Cushman and Wakefield also confirmed that they would highlight any concerns regarding potential or known likely contamination and would advise the Council that an expert consultant should be employed to clarify the extent of the same.

Members queried whether there was any funding available from the Government to help bring forward brownfield sites and whether this might be available for the Council to access. It was confirmed that in some cases such funding might be

available although it was pointed out that the majority of the Council's sites would be classified as greenfield.

In relation to item 13 on the list a query was raised as to whether there was potential for this to be a small enterprise court and members requested that officers look into this possibility.

Members queried whether the site listed at 22 could be brought back into community use. Officers stated that this could be done but there would be little commercial value to this.

Members queried when the first receipts could be received in relation to the sites listed that were currently in the Green Belt. Officers stated that in order to change the designation of the land and allow for development the Council would be unlikely to receive the receipts before about 2020. Members queried whether this process could be speeded up by approaching the Secretary of State but officers stated that such a move was unlikely to be welcomed by the Secretary of State as the Council needed to go through due process regarding the current Joint Local Plan that was being developed with the City Council and the fact that there were brownfield sites available across the conurbation that needed to be prioritised for development in the first instance.

Members considered that land also had to be made available for jobs to encourage people to come and live in the Borough and that it was better to focus on the larger sites first which would also help to attract house building firms that were less reliant on financing by the banks. Members were also wary that an oversupply of land could lead to potential developers becoming overly selective.

A confidential proposal was tabled by some members that listed sites for disposal over the next three years. The proposal listed 3 large sites for disposal in the first year as well as some smaller sites followed by 2 large sites in the second year and other areas for development in future years.

The Committee considered the sites and queried what the Council would need to do if there was a shortfall in capital receipts due to a lack of sales and what were the required timescales to ensure that this did not happen.

Officers confirmed that as long as the Council was expecting the receipts then it could look into some temporary borrowing which would not affect the general fund. The Council would need to be assured that the expected receipts would be received within 12 months in order for them to be taken into consideration for the current year's budget.

It was also confirmed that timescales for receiving the receipts would range from 18 months to 2 years.

A question was raised as to whether there were agreed criteria to enable members to prioritise the disposal of sites; this had been suggested at the Committee's second meeting (on 16 December). Officers stated that a draft set of criteria had been emailed to members of the Committee prior to the Christmas break. It was noted that officers had not received any feedback from members but it was acknowledged that the criteria had not yet been formally agreed. Hard copies of the draft criteria were distributed to all members of the Committee.

The Committee considered the criteria but expressed concerns regarding a lack of sophistication such as weightings.

The Chair requested that the Committee consider whether it was satisfied that all of the possible sites were now included in the sites list that Members had before them.

Cllr Tagg proposed the list of sites for disposal that had been tabled; this was seconded by Cllr Reddish.

Members voted on the list with 4 voting in favour and 3 against.

Resolved: That the Committee recommend the sites as listed in the tabled document for disposal.

6. **DRAFT ASSET POLICY.**

The Chief Executive presented (and distributed) a set of slides to members of the Committee in relation to the emerging asset policy for their information.

Resolved: That the information be received.

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

There was no other business.

JOHN SELLGREN
Chair