



planning permissions on the four largest sites in the Council's disposals programme. Contracts have been exchanged on one of these sites, terms agreed on a further two and detailed negotiations are underway in respect of the fourth. It is anticipated that these sites will bring capital receipts to help fund the Council's capital programme and will facilitate delivery of new housing to meet broader policy objectives of the Council.

## 2. **Issues**

### **Land Disposals**

- 2.1 Appendix 4 of the updated AMS sets out the list of sites which will be brought forward on a prioritised basis over the next three years.

### **Master Planning Sites**

- 2.2 In March 2017 Cabinet approved The Open Space and Green Infrastructure Strategy (OSGIF). Within this strategy a number of sites were identified as requiring master planning; these included land adjacent to Bradwell Crematorium and non-green belt land at Birchenwood, Kidsgrove. These future master plans will seek to identify a suitable range of land uses including any requirements to meet Council needs – e.g. open space, extension to burial grounds etc. as well as identifying any land suitable for disposal and redevelopment. At this stage only a notional boundary of the subject land has been identified. The detailed briefs will be prepared in due course in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder in order that specialist consultants can be commissioned.

- 2.3 The site of the former Knutton Recreation Centre forms part of a potential regeneration area within the wider Knutton village, including other Council land such as the small parcel of land at the rear of the Ex-Service Men's' Club. Staffordshire County Council maintains other land holdings in this area too and they are agreeable, in principle, to jointly commissioning the preparation a comprehensive land use framework for this area (following the previous Housing Market Renewal interventions). This would assist in establishing key principles around infrastructure costs and sharing of net value.

### **University Growth Corridor**

- 2.4 The Council's land interests at the former Keele golf course and surrounding area have been assimilated into a jointly commissioned master planning exercise with Keele University. The primary purpose of that piece of work at this stage is to demonstrate the feasibility of redeveloping this site along with the Keele University owned land (see separate report on this agenda).

### **Stock Condition Survey**

- 2.5 The Council has commissioned a stock condition survey of its structures (e.g. bridges, retaining walls, etc.) and property assets. A first draft of this work has been received and work is now underway to moderate its findings taking account of other known considerations. This exercise is required to identify likely/realistic short, medium and long term expenditure requirements which, in turn, will also inform a review of the Council's portfolio to identify premises which the Council may wish to dispose of.

## 3. **Options considered**

### Option 1 – Do nothing

- 3.1 If the Council did not actively fulfil its Asset Management role it would not be possible to either manage assets dynamically or demonstrate the rationale for investment; thereby exposing the Council to criticism that it had a weak approach to the management and use of its physical resources.

- 3.2 More importantly and practically, if capital receipts are not generated through the disposal of assets or there is a delay in this happening, this will mean that it will be necessary to either abandon or postpone investment in the capital programme or to find an alternative source of funding, most likely to be further borrowing (the revenue consequences of which would need to be addressed as part of the General Fund budget setting process).

Option 2 – Adopt the recommendations in this report

- 3.3 This provides a clear programme to optimise property investment in the context of the Asset Management Strategy. In addition its' implementation would facilitate delivery of the Council's capital programme to meet service needs.

4. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 The assessment of the sites identified as potential master-planning sites will seek to identify a suitable range of land uses including any requirements to meet Council needs e.g. open space, burial grounds etc. as well as land suitable for disposal and redevelopment.

- 4.3 In addition it is confirmed that officers are likely to be proposing further refinement review of the current AMS (following completion of the Stock Condition review) and it is anticipated that this will be brought to Cabinet in January 2019.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 The disposal of surplus assets enables the achievement of priority outcomes in all four of the Council's Corporate Priorities.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Council has a duty, both fiduciary and operationally, to utilise its Assets for the benefit of the community.

- 6.2 The Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) – Section 123 - the Council has a duty to achieve best consideration when disposing of its assets.

- 6.3 The Local Government Act 2000 - powers to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Borough.

- 6.4 The Council has a legal duty in respect of unauthorised access to sites under the Occupiers Liability Acts of 1957 and 1984.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 The Asset Management Strategy does not create any specific equality impacts.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The sites identified for disposal will generate capital receipts to meet the demands of the Capital programme for the short to medium term. The expectation is that the pipeline of land disposals will satisfy short term requirements; the master-planning work should contribute towards medium term needs and; longer term capital funding requirements are expected to be met from the disposal of the former municipal golf course at Keele.

8.2 The costs of the master-planning exercises will be considered as part of the budget setting cycle in January / February 2019. In the meantime the necessary briefs will be prepared and soft market testing undertaken in order to derive realistic cost estimates.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The identification of a site for disposal does not mean that the site will be sold as there is a risk that there is no suitable market interest. The Council could therefore continue to hold liabilities for these sites and revenue expenditure. Lack of land sales would create a loss of income to the Council and therefore impact on the Council's ability to deliver essential Council services. The delivery of the Asset Management Strategy brings risks of Community and/or political resistance to the land sales and potentially reputational damage to the Council.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 The Strategy affects more than 2 wards and future disposals have the potential to generate more than £50,000 and resources are required to seek planning permission for the development of the sites in advance of any disposals.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

11.1 The current Asset Management Strategy 2015/16 to 2017/18 was adopted by Cabinet on 14 January 2015 and reviewed by Cabinet in January 2016 and 2017.

12. **List of Appendices**

12.1 Asset Management Strategy 2018-22

12.2 Plans of locations to be the subject of masterplanning.