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## Economy and Property Committee

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 30 January 2025 from 7.00 pm - 7.35 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Monique Bonney (Chair), Hayden Brawn, Derek Carnell (Substitute for Councillor Sarah Stephen), Ann Cavanagh, Lloyd Chapman, Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, Alex Eyre, Peter Marchington, Terry Thompson and Ashley Wise.

**PRESENT (VIRTUALLY):** Councillors Elliott Jayes and Mark Tucker.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Joanne Johnson, Kieren Mansfield and Philippa Richardson.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Mark Last.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Roger Clark and Sarah Stephen.

594 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

595 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2024 (Minute Nos. 507 – 517) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

596 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

597 **Disposals and Community Asset Transfer Policies**

The Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager introduced the report which presented the updated draft policies, reflecting the consultation responses received, with a view to adoption. He drew Members' attention to the responses, summarised at paragraph 2.4 in the report.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members and these included:

- The second paragraph, on page 12 of the report, needed clarifying as there seemed to be a typo;
- information sought on the status of Council-owned land in Fountain Street, Sittingbourne;
- the date of the July 2024 Economy and Property Committee meetings, set out in paragraphs 1.2 and 8.2 in the report, should be 23 July, not 24 July 2024.

In response, the Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager explained that he was unable to comment in open session about the status of the land in Fountain Street and he noted the small typos in the report.

The Chair proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Hayden Brawn.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the draft Disposal Policy (as at Appendix I) and the draft Community Asset Transfer Policy (as at Appendix II) be adopted by Swale Borough Council.**

598 **Land at Great East Hall**

The Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager introduced the report which set out the background to a previous decision to secure the transfer of land at Great East Hall, Sittingbourne, to the Council, with a small proportion of the land intended to support the development of a community shop.

The Chair invited a visiting Ward Member to speak. The Ward Member thanked the Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager and the other Ward Member for the work they had carried out on this matter. He raised concern with the lack of progression and suggested the developer was 'dragging their feet'. The Ward Member said the land should be transferred into Council ownership as soon as possible and he suggested that the matter be dealt with under delegated powers with officers and the two Ward Members.

The Chair moved the following amendment to Recommendation (2): That any transfer of land to support the development of a Community Shop remains subject to meeting the previous conditions set by Committee on 8 March 2023, **with the timeframe for implementation or selection of an alternative use of the S106 money to be agreed by the Ward Members and the Chair of the Committee.** This was seconded by Councillor Ashley Wise and agreed by the Committee.

Members then agreed the substantive motions.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the time be extended during which the Council commits to reserving an appropriate parcel of land for a community shop at Great East Hall, for a period of up to 12 months.**

**(2) That any transfer of land to support the development of a Community Shop remains subject to meeting the previous conditions set by Committee on 8 March 2023, with the timeframe for implementation or selection of an alternative use of the S106 money to be agreed by the Ward Members and the Chair of the Committee.**

599 **44 Trinity Road, Sheerness - the Old Library**

The Strategic Programme and Assets Manager introduced the report which considered the options available to the Council in terms of the next steps in managing 44 Trinity Road, Sheerness (known as the Old Library). He outlined the options available as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report.

The Chair proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Hayden Brawn.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members and these included:

- Acknowledged that this was a difficult decision to make;
- the building was within a flood zone;
- suggested the building be rented out, with maybe a low-rental option, bearing in mind its condition;
- clarification sought as to whether there were any covenants on the property;
- clarification sought on the status of the neighbouring building which was in a poor state;
- this was a strategic building for the Council which needed to be utilised again; and
- acknowledged the risk to the Council, but supported the recommendations.

In response, the Strategic Programme and Assets Manager explained that the building in its current state was not in a lettable condition. He said that previously there had been very little interest in anyone else taking on the building, and advised that there were no covenants on it. The Head of Place confirmed that the neighbouring building was still for sale by auction.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the Council retained and maintained the building in its current condition, to be reviewed after a period of no more than 18 months.***

***(2) That officers explored opportunities to bring the building back to a useable standard during this period.***

600 **Forward Decisions Plan**

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.***

601 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There was no need to pass this resolution as Appendix II for item 7, 44 Trinity Road, Sheerness was not discussed at the meeting.

602 **Appendix II - 44 Trinity Road, Sheerness - the Old Library**

This exempt item was not discussed.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel