

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

3 August 2016

Lead Officer Response, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, into the Scrutiny Review on Vacant Land

Report of Councillor J Austen, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for Information Technology, E-Information and Asset Management

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- That Cabinet note the content of the report and action plan attached at **Appendix 1** and approve the progress of this action plan.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to detail the lead officer's response, (Assistant Director for Property and Estates) to the findings on the Scrutiny report that was completed in early 2016. The Review details the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Committee.
- 1.2 The lead officer's response to the review is in the form of an Action Plan, which details proposals of how to address each of the recommendations made by the Panel and can be found within Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The Committee is the Statutory Committee for the review of the work of the Growth Strategy, and it was felt timely to review this area as the topic was considered important and relevant to both elected members and the public.
- 1.4 The review aimed:
 - To review how the Council identifies land available for development , disposal or retention within the district and the decision making framework that supports this
 - To identify any opportunities for improvement
- 1.5 The recommendations following the review were:-
 - (1) That key documents such as the Asset Management Strategy, the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy and, minutes from the Asset Management Group should be more widely published.

- (2) That the asset management database be completed with assets status, to include the possible uses for sites, viability, restrictions on the asset such as tenants, covenants or contamination issues and any other relevant information that would maximise the assets worth.
- (3) That Members be contacted regarding areas within their ward on the asset management database to enable them to provide any local information they have on the sites or to help identify any additional sites.
- (4) That the Council consider undertaking an audit of its garage sites with a view to identifying how the sites could best be utilised.
- (5) The Committee recognised the progress that had been made with the establishment of the Asset Management Group but thought the membership could be widened.
- (6) That an analysis of the officers' skills in this area be undertaken with a view to development and training being provided where needed.
- (7) That consideration be given to the establishment of an interdepartmental space for officers, especially ones that do not sit on the Asset Management Group, to discuss issues regarding use of assets, share good practice and develop expertise.
- (8) That the Council reconsider its timeframe for the delivery of the Local Plan and the most appropriate place for the overseeing of this project.
- (9) That the scope of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy should be developed to encompass new approaches to the development of the Councils assets.
- (10) That the Council consider reviewing how it is monitoring its performance on asset management including measuring impact and whether we are monitoring the correct things.

1.6 Cabinet supported these recommendations at its meeting on 8 June 2016.

1.7 In response to the Scrutiny Report officers have produced an Action Plan to address each recommendation made by the Panel. The Action Plan is attached to this Report as Appendix 1.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

2.1 The recommendation is for Cabinet to agree the actions identified in the action plan – Appendix 1.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

3.1 No issues Identified at this time.

4 **Recommendations**

- 4.1 That Cabinet approve the actions identified in the Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

5 **Decision Information**

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is an executive decision which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
District Wards Affected	N/A
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Unlocking Our Growth Potential

6 **Document Information**

Appendix No	Title
1	Scrutiny Review Action Plan
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
None	
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Vacant Land - Scrutiny Review – Action Plan

Item	Recommendation - Detail	Action Required	Who by	When by	Progress
1	That key documents such as the Asset Management Strategy, the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy and, minutes from the Asset Management Group should be more widely published.	Reviewed by the AMG, so that consideration can be given to the best way of achieving this recommendation.	GG JAD Property and Estates	September 2016	The Asset Management Strategy is published online. A request has been made to publish the Disposal and Acquisition policy on the intranet and internet. Minutes of future meetings to be published on the Members Extranet.
2	That the asset management database be completed with assets status, to include the possible uses for sites, viability, restrictions on the asset such as tenants, covenants or contamination issues and any other relevant information that would maximise the assets worth	Identify vacant land from the Asset Register, review the viability of development (Desktop only), and seek opinions of Planning and legal colleagues regarding potential developments risks/restrictions. Local members should also be consulted at this stage. This will address 3 below.	MB	December 2016	Vacant sites have been identified and are detailed on the Council's Asset Register.
3	That Members be contacted regarding areas within their ward on the asset management database to enable them to provide any local information they have on the sites or to help identify any additional sites	See above	MB	December 2016	Members have been consulted.

4	That the Council consider undertaking an audit of its garage sites with a view to identifying how the sites could best be utilised	Rykneld Homes undertook a full audit of the council's garage sites in spring 2012. Following this audit a number of sites have been cleared to reduce maintenance costs and reduce risk from structures in poor condition and the presence of asbestos containing materials. One site has been developed for affordable housing, with another currently being progressed. An annual programme of reviewing garage sites is in place and regular reports are provided to the Asset Management Group. An update of the 2012 audit will be completed for the Asset Management Group to consider in Oct 16	NC/GW	Oct 16	The AMG has considered an updated audit of garage sites
5	The Committee recognised the progress that had been made with the establishment of the Asset Management Group but thought the membership could be widened	This will be placed on the agenda of the next AMG with a view to identifying gaps in membership and expanding as appropriate, initial thoughts are that a representative from Planning would be beneficial.	GG	Sept 2016	The AMG has reviewed its membership.
6	That an analysis of the officers skills in this area be undertaken with a view to development and training being provided were needed	The skills to understand the development potential of sites do exist within the organisation. 3 rd party advice (Architectural, surveys, engineering, etc) may be required to bring the site forward. Training and skills requirements to be monitored and identified through the appraisal process.	MB	Dec 2016	Skills that need to be bought in have been procured so that when a site has been identified, external advice is available and will not cause a delay to the process.
7	That consideration be given to the establishment of an interdepartmental space for officers, especially ones that do not sit on the	Property and Estates will be working on putting together an accommodation strategy, in doing so it will set up a working group made up of officers and members to	GG	Dec 2017	'Work on an Accommodation Strategy has commenced'

	Asset Management Group, to discuss issues regarding use of assets, share good practice and develop expertise	work through the issues.			
8	That the Council reconsider its timeframe for the delivery of the Local Plan and the most appropriate place for the overseeing of this project	Officers to review Local Plan delivery and report to Cabinet.	JA	July 2016	A full review of the delivery of the Local Plan was considered by Cabinet (June 8 th) including the timeframe for delivery and resourcing.
9	That the scope of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy should be developed to encompass new approaches to the development of the Councils assets.	In light of the recommendation, the Disposal and Acquisition Policy will be reviewed by the Asset Management Group and updated accordingly.	MB	August 2017	Review of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy has commenced.
10	That the Council consider reviewing how it is monitoring its performance on asset management including measuring impact and whether we are monitoring the correct things.	This has recently been reviewed as part of the Property and Estates Service Plan and the Asset Management Plan. We will reassess in light of the recommendation.	GG	Dec 2016	Review of the Property and Estates Service Plan and the Asset Management Plan has taken place.