

## Various Freehold and Leasehold Asset Disposals

# APPENDIX B

## **Beckets Park Pavilion, Northampton**

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### **5. Report Background**

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- 5.1.1 This timber clad pavilion was built circa the 1920s and used until recently as a café for park users to enjoy. Sadly, the leaseholder died in 2017 and the café has remained closed since that time.
- 5.1.2 Since the café has been closed it has been the subject of frequent vandalism and attracts anti-social behaviour. The property has been reviewed by assets with the aim of bringing it back to functional use. However given the poor condition of the property and the recognition that the Council does not have the staff with the right skills/experience to operate a successful community café, an alternative solutions needs to be found to preserve the café in the park, hence the option for a community asset transfer for qualifying third party sector organisations.
- 5.1.3 Beckets Park is one of Northampton's primary open spaces, which is located at the south of the town and within a short walk of the town centre. The park is enjoyed by students, boaters and the wider community.
- 5.1.4 Buddies of Beckets (BOB) produced a masterplan for the park, commissioned by the Northampton Borough Council (NBC). This made recommendations on many aspects of the open space. The master plan considered the history of the park, current planning policy and master plans of the area.
- 5.1.5 The proposal (which was agreed at NBC Cabinet of 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020) was to market for a qualified community organisation to submit a tender, including a business plan, demonstrating credible evidence of their financial resources, with the ability to take control of a café and fulfil the recommendation contained within the masterplan to reopen a community café.
- 5.1.6 Transfer of assets to the local community can bring benefits not only to the council but also its community partners. This type of transfer provides the ability to strengthen the sustainability of local community assets and organisations.
- 5.1.7 The process would be:

- Market the site on the basis set out above.
  - Formally advertise the disposal of an open space in the local press, as required by law, and consider any objections (This is considered necessary because the property lies within an 'open space' but it is not proposed that any significant part of the Park itself would be included in the lease). Given this is not actually open space, objections are considered unlikely.
  - Seek expressions of interest from voluntary and community sectors such as third party sectors (TPS) which are:
    - Independent of the public sector.
    - Motivated to achieve social goals (for example improving public welfare, the environment and economic well-being) rather than the desire to distribute profit.
    - Reinvest surpluses generated in pursuit of their goal.
  - Select the most suitable operator and grant a lease. It is expected that the lease would be at nil consideration or only charge for matters such as insurance which the council can be better placed to manage.
- 5.1.8 The lease would not exceed 25 years' in length (but may be less) and would contain provisions to protect the Council's interests, notably allowing the lease to be terminated if the operator no longer met the conditions of being a TPS or was not operating the café in line with the proposal submitted. There would be a mechanism to agree changes to the operating proposals if conditions justified this.

## **6. Issues and Choices**

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- 6.1.1 Becketts Park Pavilion is not in good repair and requires investment. The successful community organisation would be expected to take on the property in the current condition, secure the site and demonstrate they have the resources to deliver the desired outcomes for the pavilion and park users.
- 6.1.2 In terms of choices:
- a) Becketts Park Pavilion could remain closed and continue to fall into disrepair. It would remain under review by WNC but there would be limited resource to focus on this asset and therefore progress to bring it back to use would be likely to be slow.
  - b) The pavilion could be offered commercially for a café use.
  - c) The pavilion could be offered to a community group for café use.
- 6.1.3 Given the previous study and master-planning work, and public engagement to this point, it is suggested it would be sensible to proceed with option (c).

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources and Financial**

- 7.1.1 If the council were to retain the building the pavilion would sit as it currently has done for a number of years with little being done. The only financial risk the council has if the building would

be retained, would be the further investment needed to re-open for the community. By transferring the pavilion to a voluntary or community group, it alleviates any risk the council has over the building.

- 7.1.2 Each party would pay their own professional fees.

## 7.2 **Legal**

- 7.2.1 There are no issues not addressed in the covering report.

## 7.3 **Risk**

- 7.3.1 If the recommendation does not progress, Becket's Park Pavilion risks being left empty for the foreseeable future, which would not help the council, nor community organisations who want to invest in the area and provide a community café for the park's users.

## 7.4 **Consultation**

- 7.4.1 Ward Councillors and Buddies of Becket's have been consulted on this matter.

## 7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

- 7.5.1 None.

## 7.6 **Climate Impact**

- 7.6.1 There are no environmental or climate implications identified.

## 7.7 **Community Impact**

- 7.7.1 This report which includes a number of assets led NBC to conclude that the disposal of Becket's Park Pavilion by way of lease would have a positive effect on the local community that it serves. This still appears a reasonable perspective. The pavilion being owned and managed by respected organisations should also help with the proactive management and recreational use for this site.
- 7.7.2 Allowing this site to be managed and maintained at a level the Council could not, due to larger projects and commitments, gives an organisation the freedom to better understand the local areas and community, to offer them what is needed on a more personal level.

## **8. Background Papers**

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- 8.1 Asset Management Disposals (9<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Northampton Borough Council report)