

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: 30 MARCH 2021
title: REFERENCE FROM COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – COUNCIL ASSETS IN LONGRIDGE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: LAWSON ODDIE

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider a request from Community Services Committee in respect of the disposal of the King Street toilets site in Longridge (also sometimes referred to as Market Place toilets).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is authorised to make decisions and take actions regarding land and property matters, including disposal, where under £50,000.
- 2.2 At this stage the likely value of the site for proposed disposal is unknown and so consideration has been made in respect of the disposal by Community Services Committee. Such a disposal will also result in a capital receipt for future use in funding the capital programme.

3 COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 9 MARCH 2021

- 3.1 Community Services Committee considered a report submitted by the Director of Community Services. The report (attached at Annex 1) gave details of the physical assets in Longridge that are under the control of Community Services Committee, and particularly referenced the toilet block on King Street in Longridge (also sometimes referred to as Market Place toilets).
- 3.2 At its meeting, Community Services Committee considered the report and resolved that:

'RESOLVED: That Committee

1. Agree to relinquish control of King Street toilets site; and
2. Recommend to Policy & Finance committee that the site be advertised for sale on the open market.

- 3.3 There was public participation on this item at committee, with a request that, should the Council choose to sell the toilet block site at King Street, Longridge that the proceeds of the sale be re-invested in Longridge. This was also requested by members of Community Services Committee during the meeting.

4. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 4.1 Consider the recommendation above from Community Services committee to advertise the site for sale on the open market.
- 4.2 Consider any ringfencing of the resulting capital receipt for reinvestment in the future in Longridge.

HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES
PF28-21/LO/AC
22 March 2021

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

meeting date: TUESDAY, 9TH MARCH 2021
 title: COUNCIL ASSETS IN LONGRIDGE
 submitted by: JOHN HEAP – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
 principal author: JOHN HEAP – DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To remind committee of the physical assets in Longridge that are under the control of this committee.
- 1.2 To consider whether it is in the Council's interest to change the use of any of these assets
 - Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
 - To help make people's lives safer and healthier
 - To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area
 - Corporate Priorities - To ensure best use of council resources

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At a meeting of the Councils Longridge Assets Working Group held on 3 February 2021, it was resolved that this committee should receive a report regarding the Longridge assets under its remit.
- 2.2 The dialogue around Longridge assets (as opposed to Council assets elsewhere in the borough) appears to be driven, at least partly, by local concern for the future of Longridge Civic Hall under the stewardship of Longridge Social Enterprise Company (LSEC). However, keen local interest has been shown consistently over time in other assets, such as Kestor Lane Recreation Ground and the disused toilets in Longridge.
- 2.3 Although the Council owns 23 separate sites in Longridge, the meeting of the working group concentrated its discussions on four specific assets, namely:
 - The former public toilets (King St.)
 - The Civic Hall and associated parking
 - The Old Fire Station Youth Centre (Townley Buildings, Bury Lane)
 - The Over – 60s Club (Townley Buildings, Bury Lane)

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Each of those assets was discussed in some detail. Consideration was given to existing uses (outside of lockdown restriction, of course) and concern was expressed that each of them could be put to better use to benefit the local community.
- 3.2 In the course of the discussion, it emerged that in the case of three of the assets, LCC retain an interest in one form or another, with LSEC also retaining an operational interest in the Civic Hall.

- 3.3 So, for the purposes of this meeting, committee is asked to consider the asset from the list that has least complication, which is the disused toilet block on King Street (sometimes referred to as Market Place toilets)
- 3.4 These toilets were closed in 2012 along with 8 other sets of toilets across the borough. Officers have received a number of expressions of interest in this site in the intervening period, but the Council has not, so far, resolved to dispose of it so none of the enquiries has been pursued.
- 3.5 On learning of that history, the working group resolved that this committee should be asked for a view on the future of this disused toilet block.
- 3.6 Clearly, no urgent use of the site in question has emerged since the closure nine years ago, the question facing committee is whether to accept the view of the Longridge Assets Working Group that better use can be made of the site, and make the site available, or to reject that view and retain the site in its present state.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – The value of the King St. toilets site is not known currently, but if the site were offered for sale on the open market, given the location of the site and the level of interest shown in the past, it is likely that the Council would receive a sizeable capital receipt.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – There are no technical or legal issues giving cause for concern at the time of writing. One of the reasons for this site being the subject of discussion is the fact that minimal maintenance has been carried out in the recent years and the site is somewhat overgrown by the surrounding shrubbery. Whilst not exactly an eyesore, the site does detract from the street scene.
- Political – There is little doubt that one of a number of sources of pressure for the Council to re-examine its use of assets in Longridge is the Town Council, who are keen to see investment in the town. Although the other sites considered by the working group were constrained by existing leases, this site would be one where committee might consider that a different use could contribute to that shared objective.
- Reputation – The council has responded to local pressure by convincing a working group to examine whether/how better use can be made of Council assets in Longridge. Moving swiftly to reach a view on how best to respond in relation to the King Street site – whatever committee's view might be – would demonstrate to the people of Longridge that this committee continues to listen to their concerns.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Agree to relinquish control of the King Street toilets site, and
- 5.2 Recommend to Policy and Finance Committee that the site be advertised for sale on the open market.

JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES