

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER MEETING FOR
COUNCIL SERVICES

23 November 2015

Report of the Strategic Director Corporate Resources

The Former Children's Centre and Toy Library Site, Castle Gresley

1. Purpose of the Report

Approval is sought to declare the former Castle Gresley Children's Centre and Toy Library site surplus to the requirements of Derbyshire County Council and for the Director of Property to dispose of the whole site at auction.

2. Information and Analysis

The former Methodist Chapel and School building (see plan attached), which form part of the same site, provided accommodation for the delivery of the Children's Centre and Toy Library activities. The Toy Library was relocated from the chapel in 2011. The Children's Centre ceased to operate from the designated centre in March 2014 due to concerns over the structural stability of the rear retaining wall but was not formally relocated from the School building until March 2015, following Cabinet approval to the review of Children's Centres. Both buildings have stood vacant since and as a consequence have continued to deteriorate.

Previous attempts to sell the chapel in isolation have failed due to site constraints. A structural report, undertaken in July 2015, deemed the site a liability to Derbyshire County Council and advised that disposal would be the most viable option. The retaining wall to the rear of the site is in very poor condition and currently deemed unstable. Removal of the parapet has been advised as this is in danger of falling into the rear gardens of the adjoining houses. The structural report also recommended that rebuilding of the wall should only be considered as part of redevelopment of the whole site due to the need to dig out or retain various areas of ground around the wall (supporting the gardens of neighbouring properties), and the possible need to demolish the School building (former Children's Centre) in order to access the wall to undertake the works required. The Chapel building has major structural issues including an unsupported gable wall, dry rot and concerns in relation to health and safety for those entering the building, due to the presence of substantial amounts of guano from the resident birds.

On the basis of site surveys and structural reports it is proposed that the whole site be declared surplus and sold by way of auction. As the costs of remedying all the structural issues exceeds the value of the site, a reserve price will not be set. A sale would relieve the Council of any future financial, health and safety, and other liabilities.

3. Financial Considerations

The potential sale proceeds will form part of the estimated capital receipts required to fund the capital programme.

Without the sale, urgent works are required to make the site safe, including costs in excess of £0.150m to repair and make good the rear retaining boundary wall.

4. Legal Considerations

Structural Engineer and Surveyor's reports identify this site as a liability to Derbyshire County Council.

5. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered; prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health and transport considerations.

6. Background Papers

Site Plan. Files held by the Director of Property

7. Key Decision **NO**

8. Call-in

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report? **NO**

9. Officer Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member:-

- 9.1 approves the site of the former Castle Gresley children's Centre and Toy Library being declared surplus to requirements and
- 9.2 authorises the Director of Property to dispose of the whole site via auction.

JUDITH GREENHALGH
Strategic Director Corporate Resources

