

From: Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,
Corporate and Traded Services

Rebeca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee - 23 November 2022

Subject: Disposal of the Former Laleham Gap School, Southcliffe Parade,
Broadstairs CT10 1TJ

Classification: Unrestricted report with exempt appendix A, *not for publication under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

Past pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Member decision – 22/00106

Electoral Division: Broadstairs, Rosalind Binks

Summary: This report considers the proposed disposal of the property, the former Laleham Gap School and playing field, Southcliffe Parade, Broadstairs CT10 1TJ.

Recommendations:

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services on the proposed decision to agree the disposal of the property, the former Laleham Gap School and playing field, Southcliffe Parade, Broadstairs CT10 1TJ and delegate authority to:

1. The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to finalise the terms of the disposal; and
2. The Director of Infrastructure to authorise the execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper addresses Kent County Council's (KCC) intention to sell the former Laleham Gap School and playing field, which totals approx. 2.6 acres (1.05 hectares).

1.2 The site is made up of two parcels of land; the larger site on which the school building is located and fronts Southcliffe Parade; and the smaller playing field site which is accessed via Whytecliffs Road. The two parcels are divided by a pedestrian path, as seen in the red-line boundary plans attached in Appendix B.

1.3 The two sites are located in a predominantly residential area situated south of Broadstairs and north of Ramsgate in the area of Dumpton Park, on the sea front, approximately one mile east of Dumpton Park Train Station.

1.4 The larger school building site overlooks Dumpton Gap beach and Dumpton Bay and is bounded by Southcliffe Parade to the north and east, residential buildings to the south and the pedestrian walkway to the west. The smaller playing field site is situated adjacent to the residential roads of Whytecliffs and Boughton Avenue and is surrounded by residential buildings and the pedestrian walkway on the eastern boundary.

1.5 The school building site is set back from Southcliffe Parade and slopes from the southern boundary – which is the highest part of the site to the northern boundary – which is the lowest point. The playing field site is level with the surrounding land and buildings on Whytecliffs road and it set lower than the land and buildings on Boughton Avenue.

1.6 The playing field site is covered entirely by grass. The larger school building site is surfaced predominantly with grass but also contains a tarmac driveway with entrance and exit access to the highway, a parking area, a hardstanding playground as well as the school building and outbuildings. There are trees located over the site with a line of trees running along the boundary with the walkway and the boundary along Southcliffe Parade.

1.7 A site plan is shown in Appendix B.

2. History

2.1 The Title to the Freehold was compulsory acquired by the Council in 1948.

2.2 The site became vacant in 2016 following a relocation of the school to a new site. Since this date alternative service needs have been considered however, none have been identified and it remains vacant. It has been allocated as surplus and suitable for disposal.

2.3 Subsequent to the relocation of the school to a new site, the Council have gained consent of the Secretary of State for Education to dispose of the school site and the playing field under Schedule 1 of the Academies Act 2010 and Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

2.4 In 2017 and in conjunction with planning consultants, the Council sought pre-application advice from Thanet District Council (TDC) for a proposed residential development on the separate parcels of land. The pre-application was received positively and subsequently, both parcels have been allocated for housing within the TDC Local Plan (2020) under policy HO1 and known as 'Gap House School, 1 Southcliffe Parade, Broadstairs'.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 The sale of the property will result in a capital receipt which will be reinvested back into the Council's Capital programme. Further financial information is set out in the exempt appendix A.

3.2 The disposal of the property will remove associated holding costs whilst easing pressure on revenue budgets.

4. Marketing

4.1 Subject to the necessary approvals being forthcoming, KCC will appoint a suitably qualified agent to openly market the site in quarter one of 2023 on an “all enquiries” basis to allow any interested parties to submit a bid for the site.

4.2 A marketing campaign to advertise the site through various media channels will be undertaken to ensure a wide potential audience is reached; appropriate due diligence will be undertaken on any bidders.

4.3 Bids will be appraised in line with the Council’s legislative and fiduciary duties, and in compliance with the Freehold asset disposal policy.

4.4 Following the formal submission of bids, the bids will be assessed considering the following criteria:

- Overall price, any pricing caveats, or exclusions
- Any conditionality on the proposals and deliverability
- Compliance with the Local Plan affordable housing requirements, if appropriate
- Deliverability of the proposals submitted if they are reliant on the planning process
- Funding security
- Any factors of opportunity cost that KCC may wish to consider other than those described above delivering operational or policy returns.

4.5. Due diligence will be undertaken as appropriate which may include valuation, planning or other specialist advice.

4.6. Following the consideration of initial bids, ‘best and final’ offers may be requested. It is proposed to select the best submission that enables KCC to deliver the maximum capital receipt for the Council (considering the factors described in 4.4).

5. Options

5.1. Following internal consideration, no operational requirement for the site has been established. Therefore, the only options to be considered were limited to holding the property or disposal.

5.2. Continuing to hold leaves the Council exposed to ongoing costs, and the buildings on site remain an inherent risk.

5.3. The exempt appendix A sets out the approaches considered by the Council since the site was declared surplus.

5.4. A freehold disposal will allow a capital receipt to be generated for reinvestment back into the Council’s stated capital priorities.

5.5. A freehold disposal is the preferred option for the site, seeking offers on an “all enquiries” basis to ensure all market interest is explored in line with the Council’s statutory duties.

6. Governance and Legal implications

6.1. A Key Decision is being sought in line with the constitution and the Council’s governance processes. The views of the local Member in accordance with the property management protocol have been sought and will be reported to the Cabinet Member before a Key Decision is taken.

6.2. The Council has a duty under s123 of the 1972 Local Government Act to obtain not less than best consideration in the disposal of property assets.

6.3. External legal advisors will be appointed in consultation with General Counsel.

7. Equalities implications (EQIA)

7.1. The Key Decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member does not relate to a service delivery or change.

7.2. The site has been vacant since 2016 and has already been declared surplus to the Council’s operational requirements.

7.3. An EQIA has been undertaken and has identified no impact on any groups with protected characteristics in relation to the proposed decision.

8. Consultation

The local Member for the division has been consulted and has provided no comment or objection at the point of the drafting of this report. If any comments are subsequently received prior to the meeting, they will be reported to the Cabinet Committee and to the Cabinet Member.

9. Next Steps and Conclusions

9.1. An indicative timetable for the planned disposal is set out below:

Stage	Timescale
Marketing	Q1 2023
Bid appraisal	Q1 2023/Q2 2023
Exchange	Q2 2023
Completion assuming unconditional sale	Q2 2023
Completion assuming conditional sale	Q1 2024 (subject to terms agreed with selected bidder)

9.2. The site has been declared surplus to the Council’s operational requirements and a disposal decision is now sought from the Cabinet Member, in accordance with the Council’s strategy of recycling assets to produce capital receipts for reinvestment into capital project priorities.

10. Recommendations

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services on the proposed decision to agree to the disposal of the property, the

former Laleham Gap School and playing field, Southcliffe Parade, Broadstairs CT10 1TJ and delegate authority to:

1. The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to finalise the terms of the disposal; and
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11. Background Documents

Appendix A – Exempt Appendix

Appendix B – Site Plan

Appendix C – Proposed Record of Decision

12. Contact details

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