

From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader
Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 8 July 2025

Subject: Freehold Disposal of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH.

Decision no: 25/00048

Key Decision: *Yes, the decision involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m.*

Classification: **Unrestricted report with exempt appendix D**, *not for publication under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular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

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Dover Town - Local Members, James Defriend (Reform) and Albert Thorp (Reform)

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This report considers the proposed disposal of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH.

Recommendations:

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader on the proposed decision to agree to:

1. the disposal of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH; and
2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Given the poor condition of the building in accordance with the Future Asset programme the majority of existing users relocated to Dover District Council Offices in Whitfield, Dover. Following the consideration of other potential uses, the building is deemed surplus to KCC operational requirements.
- 1.2 This report addresses the Council's intention to dispose of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH.

- 1.3 The property is known as Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH and comprises offices for KCC Children, Families & Education, KCC Adult Social Services, a disused nursery building, associated parking, grassland, vegetation and trees.
- 1.4 The property, since 2007 has comprised office accommodation for KCC Children, Families & Education and KCC Adult Social Services. Prior to 2007 the property was a former primary school, pupil referral unit and is now a disused nursery building with associated parking. Part of the site comprises grassland, vegetation and trees. The site area is approximately 3.64 acres with direct access via Melbourne Avenue. It has been mostly vacated by KCC services, apart from Trading Standards, who will be relocating in July 2025 at which point the site will be fully vacant.
- 1.5 The built form part of the site is circa 1.85 acres and is located within the Dover Urban Area, with the open space being located outside of settlement confines. The remainder of the site is designated as Open Space within the Local Plan. A Public Notice may need to be served in due course, prior to the marketing of the site in order to comply with the Local Government Act 1972.
- 1.6 As the building has not been used for an education purpose for over 20 years KCC is not required to consult under schedule 1A or secure S77 approval.
- 1.7 The site plan shows the redline boundary for the proposed disposal and is attached at Appendix B.
- 1.8 Exempt Appendix D includes more detailed and financial information which is commercially sensitive.

2. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 2.1. **Reuse the site:** KCC has no operational requirement for the site – *Dismissed*.
- 2.2. **Continue to hold the site vacant in case of a future requirement:**
Continuing to hold the site will leave the Council with ongoing costs for securing it against unauthorised access and potential claims for injuries arising from any trespassing. Continuing deterioration of the redundant buildings remains an inherent risk for KCC – *Dismissed*.
- 2.3. **Letting the property as part of the Tenanted Estate to generate an income:**
The current buildings on the site are in poor condition and the prospect of securing a tenant is considered unlikely and unviable. KCC would forgo any capital receipt whilst this option was pursued – *Dismissed*.
- 2.4. **Disposal of the asset:** A freehold disposal will allow a capital receipt to be generated for reinvestment back into the Council's stated capital priorities and support the delivery of the Council's statutory obligations. Disposal will also eliminate holding costs associated with the property - *Recommended option*.

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.
- 3.2. The disposal will remove holding costs associated with the site, easing pressure on revenue budgets.
- 3.3. Further financial information is set out in the Exempt Appendix D.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1. The Council has an overarching duty under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain not less than best consideration in the disposal of property assets and it also has a fiduciary duty to the residents of Kent.
- 4.2. External legal advisors have been appointed in consultation with General Counsel.

5. Equalities implications

- 5.1. The Key Decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member does not relate to a service delivery or change.
- 5.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken and has not resulted in any implications which might impact upon a disposal of the Council's interest; a copy of this is attached at Appendix C.

6. Data Protection Implications

- 6.1. As part of this approval process and in the handling of the disposal of the site, Data Protection regulations will be observed.
- 6.2. A Data Protection Implication Assessment (DPIA) screening has confirmed that there are no DPIA implications and that a further DPIA assessment is not required in respect of this decision.

7. Other corporate implications

- 7.1. None - This decision will not have any impact on other areas of the Council's work.

8. Governance

- 8.1. 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 will be sought and will be reported to the Cabinet Member before a Key Decision is taken.

9. Conclusions

9.1. The site has been declared surplus to the Council's operational requirements. In accordance with the Council's strategy of recycling assets to produce capital receipts for reinvestment into capital project priorities, it is recommended that this site is progressed for disposal.

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

Stage	Timescale
Marketing	Q4 2025
Bid Appraisal	Q1 2026
Exchange of contracts	Q2 2026
Completion of sale assuming unconditional sale	Q4 2026
Completion of sale assuming conditional sale	Q4 2027

9.3. The sale of the property will result in a capital receipt which will be reinvested back into the Council's Capital Programme.

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

9.5. Subject to the necessary approvals being forthcoming, KCC prepare and execute a disposal strategy to affect a disposal in accordance with adopted KCC Freehold Property Asset Disposal Policy and its statutory and fiduciary obligations.

Recommendations:

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader on the proposed decision to agree to:

1. the disposal of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.
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10. Appendices

10.1. Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

10.2. Appendix B – Site Plan

10.3. Appendix C – EQIA

10.4. Appendix D – Exempt Information

12. Contact details

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