

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Decision to be taken by: Neil Corbett, Assistant Director of Asset Management and Property Services

Pursuant to an Authorisation from Cabinet on 20th September 2023 which delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Asset Management and Property Services to dispose of the property. (First declared surplus by Cabinet on 5th February 2014).

Report title: The disposal of land at Blackbridge, Gloucester to Gloucester City Council for use as a Community Sports hub

The decision	To dispose of land at Blackbridge, Gloucester ,shown edged red on the plan attached to this report, to Gloucester City Council at nil consideration
Background documents	<p>Cabinet Decision 5 February 2014 Decision - Schedule of Disposals (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p> <p>Cabinet decision 20 September 2023 Decision - Schedule of Proposed Disposals (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p> <p>Planning decision Notice for Sports hub ref 23/00103/FUL dated 7th June 2023 23/00103/FUL Proposed community and sports hub including a new building housing changing rooms, fitness studio and viewing areas, an all-weather pitch with flood lights, reprofiling of existing pitches, car parking, new vehicular access, play area, and landscaping. Land At Blackbridge Laburnum Road Gloucester GL1 5PQ</p> <p>GCC's Disposals Policy Microsoft Word - GCC Policy for the Disposal of Property 2012 v5 March 2021 (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p>
Reasons for the decision	<p>In 2014 Cabinet declared the land surplus and endorsed proposals to <i>'implement a process to either lease or transfer Blackbridge Recreation Fields, Tuffley to the most appropriate community organisation, and delegate authority to the Property Strategy Lead to implement and complete this process.'</i></p> <p>In line with this decision Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) has been seeking an appropriate 3rd party to transfer the site to safeguard it for this purpose. The decision to dispose of the land was confirmed again by Cabinet on 20 September 2023.</p>
Resource implications	To implement the Cabinet decision GCC is transferring the site at nil value to Gloucester City Council to deliver sports facilities for the community on a not-for-profit basis

<p>Who has been consulted?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cllr Stowe, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Change 2. Interim Executive Director of Corporate Resources 3. Legal Services 4. Finance
<p>What were their comments?</p> <p>Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, Interim Executive Director of Corporate Resources, Legal Services and Finance: no objection to the proposed disposal of the land to Gloucester City Council and the subsequent lease to Blackbridge Charitable Community Benefit Society.</p>	
<p>Background/Context</p> <p>Introduction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Blackbridge Recreation Field ('the Recreation Field') was transferred to GCC upon Local Government reorganisation in 1974 and originally held for education, while the City Council retained surrounding land used for recreation and leisure and since then has been used on an ad hoc basis by various sports groups and dog walkers. 2. In 2014 Recreation Field was formally declared surplus to requirements. Cabinet gave approval for part to be promoted in the local plan as a housing site and this is the decision on the remainder of the site (the subject of this paper) :- <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><i>Endorse the proposals to implement a process to either lease or transfer Blackbridge Recreation Fields, Tuffley to the most appropriate community organisation, and delegate authority to the Property Strategy Lead to implement and complete this process</i></p> 3. There were a number of potential positives associated with passing the land to an appropriate community interest organisation, including accessing lottery funds held by Podsmead Big Local, which would enable the development of sporting facilities to a level; which GCC could not justify or afford. Many groups came forward with the backing of local councillors and discussions took place but nothing came to fruition. 4. At the start of 2017, Active Gloucestershire were commissioned by the City Council to bring together key interested parties and explore the need for developing the Blackbridge fields. 5. A new community group was formed in 2021, the Blackbridge Charitable Community Benefit Society (BCCBS), supported by Active Gloucestershire and Podsmead Big Local, to take the sports hub project forward. This proposed transfer of land has supported an allocation of up to 30 dwellings for housing on adjoining land off New Dawn View situated to the south of Recreation Fields (allocation ref. SA11 in the Gloucester City Plan). In addition, the Recreation Fields are allocated as a multi-use sports, physical activity and community hub along with Gloucester City Council owned land in the Gloucester City Plan 2011-2031 which was adopted in January 2023. BCCBS submitted a planning application for the proposed new sports hub and planning permission was granted 7th June 2023. 6. To protect both the City and County Councils interests, it was agreed that: 	

- GCC's land is transferred to the City Council at nil value to provide community facilities and
- The City Council will subsequently lease their land and GCC's land to BCCBS to provide community facilities, which will include the proposed new sports hub. The City Council will have overall control of the land as landlord and GCC's interests will be protected by the inclusion of the covenant restricting its use.

Value of the site

7. The Market Value of the site has been established in a formal valuation by an external agent at Nil Value. This is due to the covenant GCC is imposing on the site which will restrict the use by a not-for-profit community organisation for the benefit of the community to deliver community sports and community facilities together with associated uses.

Proposed sale of the Site to Gloucester City Council

8. In accordance with GCC's Disposals Policy, Gloucester City Council is a special category of purchaser. Requests to sell property at Market Value to this category on a 1:1 basis can be approved by the appropriate Officer under the scheme of delegation/authorisation, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance & Change.
9. If the sports hub does not proceed, the site will remain with Gloucester City Council as freehold owner. The proposed covenant which GCC imposes on the sale will ensure the site 'is used by a not for profit community organisation for the benefit of the community to deliver community sports and community facilities together with associated uses'.

Alternative options considered and why they were rejected

The alternative would be for GCC to retain and maintain the site and for it to continue to be used on an ad hoc basis by local sports groups, dog walkers etc. Given the site is surplus to GCC's requirements, and is allocated as a community sports hub in the City Plan, transferring the freehold of the site to Gloucester City Council to manage along with their other sports grounds was considered the most appropriate option.

Risk Analysis

The key risk is that Gloucester City Council doesn't proceed to completion. If this occurs, other options will be explored to dispose of the site.

Equalities considerations

There are no specific equality considerations for the sale of the site to Gloucester City Council. However, the overall purpose of the sale is to enable BCCBS to provide a community led Community and Sports Hub. It will be for the City Council, as freehold owner of the site, to consider the equality considerations set out in the Equalities Act 2010 in leasing the land to the Society.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed? No, but the freehold owner of the land has their own equality vision and action plan

Has any conflict of interest been declared by any Cabinet Member consulted on the decision?

The council's Monitoring Officer should be consulted, in the first instance, if any conflict of interest is declared by a Cabinet Member.

No

If any conflict of interest declared, was a dispensation granted by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Council?

N/A

Does this decision report form or any supporting papers provided contain confidential or exempt information?

(Refer to Democratic Services Unit for advice if necessary)

No

Schedule of Disposals approved by Cabinet by virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Does this decision need to be published on the GCC website?

(Refer to guidance on "Executive Decisions taken by Officers").

Yes

In coming to this decision I have given due and full regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act") by reference to the law itself.

Having fully considered all available information, I have decided to reject any alternative options and take the recommended decision(s), for the reasons set out in this report.

Signed: _____



Name: Neil Corbett

Title: Assistant Director of Asset Management and Property Services

Date 14/11/2023

Contact details for further information:

Officer: Lindsay Reid

Tel: 01452 328846

Email: lindsay.reid@gloucestershire.gov.uk

