



CABINET - 2ND NOVEMBER 2016

SUBJECT: FORMER RISCA COLLIERIES WORKMEN'S INSTITUTE

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to dispose of the former Risca Collieries Workmen's Institute (as shown edged black on the plan – "the asset") by way of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council acquired the asset in June 1996, for community education purposes, with the ground floor being occupied by Oxford House Industrial History Society [OHHS].
- 2.2 In 2014, Community Education determined that the asset was surplus to its operational purposes; officers engaged with OHHS, which remained in occupation, to explore the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer [CAT].
- 2.3 It became apparent that OHHS was not in a position to sustain a CAT and officers engaged with Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations to explore whether a viable CAT could be promoted.
- 2.4 After consultations with the community, and Town Council, Newport & South Wales Railway Museum [NSWRM] emerged as a suitable prospect.
- 2.5 In line with the agreed procedure, the matter is being referred to Cabinet for a decision.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

The contents of this report link to the following key strategic objectives:

- 3.1 Under its approved Asset Management Objectives, the Authority aims to manage its land and buildings effectively, efficiently and economically and provide a safe, sustainable and accessible living and working environment for all users.
- 3.2 The Authority has a medium term financial plan (MTFP), which includes cost saving targets resulting from the disposal of assets.
- 3.3 The proposal contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:
1. **A prosperous Wales**, in that an asset, operationally surplus to the Council, is transferred to a new holder for a new purpose (in part) thereby using resources efficiently and proportionately and facilitating educational opportunities.

2. **A healthier Wales**, because recreational opportunities, such as the one afforded by this proposal, facilitate people's mental and (in this instance to a lesser extent) physical well-being.
3. **A Wales of cohesive communities**, because recreational opportunities, such as this, can help bring communities together.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council acquired the asset in June 1996, for community education purposes, with the ground floor being occupied by Oxford House Industrial History Society [OHIHS].
- 4.2 In 2014, Community Education determined that the asset was surplus to its operational purposes; officers engaged with OHIHS, which remained in occupation, to explore the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer [CAT].
- 4.3 It became apparent that OHIHS was not in a position to sustain a CAT and officers engaged with Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations to explore whether a viable CAT could be promoted.
- 4.4 After consultations with the community, and Town Council, Newport & South Wales Railway Museum [NSWRM] emerged as a suitable prospect.
- 4.5 Officers have reviewed the Business Plan and Financial Forecasts submitted and have concluded that NSWRM, is a sound proposition. It should form the base for an expanding community facility; in conjunction with OHIHS, NSWRM plans to approach local schools and colleges for organised combined visits believing that model railways attract an interest in budding electrical and mechanical engineers. They believe the ground floor lecture room facility (with a digital projector and screen, and having a capacity of at least 60 people) could be made available to other groups in the local area needing a regular base.
- 4.6 For the avoidance of doubt, NSWRM has been advised that the Former Risca Collieries Workmen's Institute is a Grade II Listed Building. The listing relates both to the exterior and interior of the building, to any object or structure fixed to it, and any structure within its curtilage which forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948. NSWRM has been made aware that if it proposes to undertake any works to the building, which will change the character of the building, it will need to ensure that it obtains the relevant consents, and in particular Listed Building Consent (LBC). It has been informed that queries about whether LBC is required, or any general enquiries in relation to the listed building should be directed to the Conservation & Design Officer in the Planning Division. Officers satisfied themselves that the Business Case has taken account of the listing for future maintenance costs etc as part of their review of the Business Case mentioned in paragraph 4.5.
- 4.7 The proposal is to transfer a long leasehold interest of a minimum of 25 years to safeguard our ability to meet long-term generational needs; should NSWRM, for whatever reason, no longer be capable of using the asset for a community benefit the lease will be terminated and ownership will revert to the Council unless a suitable alternative body can be found to succeed NSWRM.
- 4.8 NSWRM is currently paying a third party for the storage of its exhibits and effects. The grant of early entry to the former Risca Collieries Workmen's Institute will ease the strain on the organisation's cash flow and bring the asset into greater beneficial use in a timely manner.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This proposal does contribute to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. Additionally, the proposal looks to the long term in that it safeguards the ability to meet long

term generational needs. Implementation of the proposal involves a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them by offering a community facility through asset transfer. Finally, the proposal demonstrates that we are working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/of low level or minor negative impact have been identified and, therefore, a full EqIA has not been carried out.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Authority has a medium term financial plan (MTFP), which includes cost saving targets resulting from the disposal of assets.
- 7.2 Asset transfer will impact positively on relevant revenue budgets. Because this asset is part of Oxford House Adult Education Centre, one of five buildings, it has not been possible to separately identify its running costs, but clearly there will be a saving to the revenue budget. However the most recent condition survey (June 2014) has identified forecast works over a 5 year period totalling £200,000; asset transfer will relieve the council of this obligation. The prospective tenant has been made aware of this forecast and has made due allowance in their Business Case.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications arising out of this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 There are no views expressed as a result of consultation that differ from the recommendation.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the former Risca Collieries Workmen's' Institute (as shown edged black on the plan) is leased to Newport & South Wales Railway Museum at a peppercorn, by way of a Community Asset Transfer.
- 10.2 That Newport & South Wales Railway Museum is granted early entry, with immediate effect.
- 10.3 Approval of the detailed terms of the lease be delegated to the Head of Property Services in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Asset Management, for the purposes identified in the report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 The asset is not required operationally and is regarded as surplus.
- 11.2 The Protocol for Disposal of Property states, at paragraph 8.1(iv), that in those cases where it is possible to market a property but the Head of Property is of the opinion that this course of action may not be in the best financial or service interests of the Authority, Cabinet approval will be obtained before direct negotiations are opened with a single party, and the views of ward members will be taken into consideration.

- 11.3 The transfer of the asset will release the Council from future maintenance and financial obligations.
- 11.4 The strain on the organisation's cash flow will be eased and the asset brought into greater beneficial use in a timely manner.
- 11.5 The proposed transfer will provide an opportunity to develop and maintain a valuable community resource.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003.
- 12.2 This is a Cabinet function.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1: Plan showing the land

