

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
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CABINET

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

12 NOVEMBER 2021

A.9 FREEHOLD SALE OF LAND AT BEACON HILL FORT, HARWICH

(Report prepared by Jennie Wilkinson)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval, in principle, for the freehold disposal of land at Beacon Hill Fort, Harwich.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tendring District Council owns part of Beacon Hill Fort, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the other part is in private ownership. Over the years suitable uses for the site have been explored and agreements proposed with TDC and the private owners but none of these have come to fruition.

One of the past difficulties in bringing this property into use has been the complications created by there being more than one owner. TDC's past attempts to purchase the privately owned parts of the Fort proved unsuccessful and in June 2018 a decision was taken to initiate the Property Dealing Procedure in order to explore disposal options for TDC's land.

All those with an interest in the area have been contacted and details of provisional terms are set out in Part B of the Agenda.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Cabinet agrees to the principle of the freehold sale of land at Beacon Hill Fort, Harwich.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

These decisions will contribute towards the following Council Priorities:

- Use assets to support priorities
- Promote Tendring's tourism, cultural and heritage offers
- Balanced annual budget

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

The sale of the land will provide a capital receipt that can be used to support other priorities.

Risk

It is not considered that the transaction provides any significant risks to TDC.

LEGAL

In coming to decisions in relation to the management of assets, the Council must act in accordance with its statutory duties and responsibilities. Under case law following Section 120 of Local Government Act 1972, the Council is obliged to ensure that the management of its assets are for the benefit of the District.

Section 123(1) Local Government Act 1972 indicates that, a local authority may dispose of land held by it in any way it wishes so long as (section 123 (2)) the land is disposed for a consideration not less than the best that can reasonably be obtained.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

Whilst it is a fenced area, parts of this land are remote and overgrown, making it a target for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. If the area can be managed as part of a wider project/use it is hoped that will deter such behaviours.

The Ward Member has been advised of this report.

Ward

Harwich & Kingsway

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Beacon Hill Fort is a Scheduled Ancient Monument described in its Listing as a 'Late 19th and 20th Century Coastal Artillery Fortification'. The Council purchased its parts of the Fort and surrounding land from The Secretary of State for Defence in stages between 1974 and 1984.

In the past, TDC have tried to purchase the privately owned parts of the Fort and the neighbouring former Pumping Station, however neither of these negotiations proved successful and both properties have been purchased separately by new private owners within recent years.

Tendring District Council is currently undertaking a project to rationalise its assets and this area at Beacon Hill Fort has lain unused since it was purchased over 45 years ago, despite efforts to find a use for it.

It is considered that, if the Fort is held under one ownership, it will make it much easier to put into practice a plan for the site that is achievable and acceptable to Historic England.

The Council have not been successful in procuring the entire site themselves and it may

be the time to step back and sell its part of the site in order to facilitate a viable future for the benefit of the District.

CURRENT POSITION

Following initiation of the Property Dealing Procedure, a valuation report was obtained and all those with an interest in the land contacted. All these parties have recently been contacted again and provided with an opportunity to express an interest in acquiring land should they wish.

Details of the responses received and the terms proposed are set out in Part B of the Agenda.

FURTHER HEADINGS RELEVANT TO THE REPORT

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

APPENDICES

None