**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING & PLANNING AND**
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ASSETS & COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**9 April 2026**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR PLANNING & COMMUNITY**

**A. Initiation of the Property Dealing Procedure in relation to conversion of the former Cash Office building at 14a Waddesdon Road, Harwich into a two-bedroom accessible housing property.**

## PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holders to submit a planning application for conversion of the former Cash Office at 14a Waddesdon Road, Harwich, into a two-bedroom accessible housing property.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the successful launch of a new bill payment scheme, the Council started phasing out cash payments and all its cash offices were closed by 2018, with Harwich office being one of the first to close, ceasing operation circa 2016.

The property was subsequently let to several commercial tenants, the last of which was an electrical contractor using it as office space. However, due to limited space they soon decided to relocate.

Given the building's position, directly adjoining existing Council housing and other residential properties, as well as being some distance from any established commercial areas, it became clear that the site may be better suited for conversion to residential use. Recognising the shortage of accessible homes within the District and the suitability of the building's footprint and location, the Building Services team started working on plans to convert the commercial unit into an accessible two-bedroom property with a private garden and parking space. Necessary surveys have been carried out, and plans were prepared in 2019-2020.

This report seeks the required authority to enable the project to reactivate and for planning consent to be applied for.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

**It is recommended that:**

**(a) The Portfolio Holders authorise the initiation of the Property Dealing Procedure in respect of the proposed conversion of the former Cash Office at 14a Waddesdon Road, Harwich, into a residential dwelling**

**(b) Subject to (a) authorise the submission of a planning application to facilitate the proposed conversion.**

## REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The building has remained vacant for several years, providing no income and presenting risk of deterioration. The location is highly suitable for residential use, being adjacent to existing social housing and near the High Street, local amenities, rail services and the seafront. The building's single-storey layout makes it particularly suitable for conversion into an accessible bungalow.

Rising local housing demand, continued reduction in local housing stock through the Right to Buy scheme, and the shortage of accessible homes in the area - all provide strong justification for progressing with this proposed conversion.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The following options were considered and eliminated:

- Do nothing: The asset will continue to deteriorate causing nuisance to neighbours; this will also have a negative impact on the Council's reputation
- Seek a commercial tenant and let in the current condition: the location is not well suited to commercial use and rent levels achievable here are minimal
- Seek a community focussed tenant and let in the current condition: The available space is limited and would not be suitable for larger groups, also a significant investment would be required to refurbish the property to bring it up to standard.
- Dispose of the building: The cash office building is attached to and shares access routes with the Council-owned block of flats, making disposal impractical.

## PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

## DELIVERING PRIORITIES

This decision supports the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028:

- Pride in our area and services to residents
- Financial sustainability and openness

It is also consistent with the Housing Asset Management Plan commitment to investment in existing stock and maintaining the decent Home Standards.

## OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

The Ward member is aware of this report and its recommendations. If planning consent is achieved, then the project will be taken to the tenants panel for their comments, prior to a further decision being sought to implement it.

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| **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)** | | | |
| **Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)** | ~~YES~~/NO | **If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision** | ☐ Significant effect on two or more wards<br>☐ Involves £100,000 expenditure/income<br>☐ Is otherwise significant for the service budget |
| | | **And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)** | |

The Powers to provide and deal with social housing land and property are provided by the Housing Act 1985.

Section 19(1), Housing Act 1985 – Appropriation of land for housing purposes – This is the statutory basis for moving land (including commercial property being converted to housing) from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account, provided it will be used for Part II housing purposes.

Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows appropriation where land is no longer needed for its existing purpose. In this instance approval from the Secretary of State is not required.

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| ☐ | **The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:** |

**FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not seek approval for capital expenditure. A subsequent report will set out cost estimates, funding arrangements and procurement proposals for approval prior to implementation.

The property will require transfer from General Fund to Housing Revenue Account. This doesn't require the consent of the Secretary of State and can be facilitated by the Accounting Team once the decision has been agreed. Funding and other resources to support a refurbishment project will likely be sourced from within the Housing Investment Programme and Disabled Facilities Grants, however this will form part of a future decision.

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| ☐ | **The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:** |

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| **USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY** | |
| The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators: | |
| A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services; | The Council operates a 30 year business plan for its housing functions, this sets a framework for decisions on expenditure and other resources. |
| B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and | The Council's Constitution and scheme of delegations provide assurance that the decision has the best interest and minimal risks to the Council. This decision is also in line with the Council's Housing Asset Management Plan. |
| C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services. | It is considered that this property would deliver greater value as a housing asset rather than remaining in non-residential use. Converting it to residential accommodation would therefore maximise the benefit of this property to the Council. |
| **MILESTONES AND DELIVERY** | |
| If approved, the Property Services team will refine designs, prepare a detailed specification and submit the planning application. A planning decision is expected within approximately three months of submission.<br>Following this, further reports will then be prepared to facilitate the transfer of the property from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account, and setting out a project proposal and anticipated budget in order to gain agreement to take the project forward. | |
| **ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION** | |
| Planning risk: The scheme could face objections or require amendments. Early engagement with Planning Services will help ensure compliance and reduce potential challenges. | |
| **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS** | |
| No adverse equality impacts are anticipated. The scheme provides accessible accommodation that may enhance inclusivity. | |
| **SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS** | |
| No negative social value impacts are identified. The proposal is expected to have a positive effect through improved local housing provision. | |
| **IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DEVOLUTION AND/OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION** | |
| It is in the best interest of the Council to regularise the position on assets and property prior to a new organisation taking over. | |

| IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050 |
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| The proposed conversion will make a positive contribution to the Council's carbon reduction objectives. The design incorporates measures to improve the building's thermal performance, reducing energy demand and overall consumption. In addition, the development will include solar photovoltaic (PV) generation, use of air source heat pump as a sustainable heating solution, and electrical vehicle charging infrastructure. |

| OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS | |
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| **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** | Vacant and derelict properties can be targets of anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping. Conversion of this property should have a positive effect in relation to crime and disorder. |
| **Health Inequalities** | Provision of accessible housing supports improved health outcomes for residents with mobility needs. |
| **Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)** | There are no proposed subsidies. |
| **Area or Ward affected** | Harwich and Kingsway (Beacon Hill) |

## PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

| BACKGROUND |
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| The former Harwich Cash Office was closed as part of the wider service rationalisation programme. Its location, surrounded by existing Council housing and other residential properties and distant from established commercial areas, makes it unsuitable for ongoing commercial use. In addition, the building offers limited space and would require significant investment to be viable for community purposes.<br><br>Accordingly, converting the property into an accessible two-bedroom home represents the most effective and sustainable use of the asset. |
| **PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS** |
| None |
| **BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL** |
| None |

| APPENDICES |
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| None |

| REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S) | |
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