PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ASSETS & COMMUNITY SAFETY

29 September 2026

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR PLANNING & COMMUNITY

A. FREEHOLD DISPOSAL OF THE FORMER PUBLIC CONVENIENCES BUILDING, MILL LANE, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder to agree the freehold sale of former public conveniences building at Mill Lane in Walton-on-the-Naze.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The former public conveniences building at Mill Lane, Walton-on-the-Naze has been vacant, closed and unused since December 2017 following implementation of the Council's Public Conveniences Strategy. The property has continued to deteriorate during this period, and it is now in a poor condition, requiring significant capital investment before it could be repurposed for a commercial use.

In 2018, a proposal was developed to demolish the building alongside the neighbouring former Old Mess building as part of a wider redevelopment opportunity. Following receipt of a public petition opposing demolition, on 14 December 2018 Cabinet decided to allow some additional time for proposals for an alternative use for the property to be submitted to the Council from any interested parties.

No proposals were received in the following 2 years, and the building remained vacant and deteriorating. Further consideration of the property was undertaken in December 2020, when Cabinet re-considered the petition and decided the next course of action for the building.

Following that, several attempts were made to seek an interested party to take on leasehold of the property. A prospective tenant withdrew in 2022, no tender submissions were received during 2023 marketing exercise, and a further proposed lease transaction failed to complete in 2024.

In April 2026 further tender process was undertaken, seeking either leasehold or freehold disposal. The Council received an offer from a purchaser seeking a freehold acquisition. Following negotiations to achieve a market value of the property, agreement in principle was reached. The prospective purchaser is a local resident, who intends to operate his computer repair and maintenance business from the property, providing computer and IT support to the local community.

The disposal of the property will remove an ongoing liability from the Council's asset portfolio, eliminate future maintenance obligations and secure a capital receipt that can be redirected towards the Council's wider priorities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that:

The Portfolio Holder approves the freehold disposal of the former public conveniences building in Walton-on-the-Naze.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The property is currently vacant and in condition that makes occupation not possible without significant investment. Despite a number of marketing exercises and discussions with prospective occupiers over the past few years, the Council has been unable to secure a viable leasehold arrangement.

Significant works would be required to make the property suitable for occupation, including replacement electrical installations, internal alternations, removal of redundant sanitaryware, repairs to the building fabric, replacement doors and windows, and comprehensive refurbishment throughout.

Given competing demands on the Council's capital resources and officer capacity, investment in the property cannot be justified. Disposal represents the most effective option and is consistent with asset management principles, enabling the Council to secure a capital receipt whilst transferring future repair, maintenance and liabilities to a third party.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The following options were considered and eliminated:

a) Do nothing: the property will continue to deteriorate, creating poor visual impression within the local area, potentially attracting vandalism; this will have a negative impact on the Council's reputation

b) Refurbish and retain the property: this has a significant capital cost and resource implications, with no guarantee of achieving a satisfactory financial return.

c) Demolish and redevelop: this option was previously explored and not progressed; it has a significant cost and resource implications; the constrained nature of the site limits redevelopment opportunities.

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 - vacant sites attract anti-social behaviour as well as generally deteriorating bringing the area down. This lets down neighbouring properties and residents and makes them less likely to look after and take pride in their own property and surrounding area.

- Financial sustainability and openness - achieving best value is important in order for capital receipts to be maximised for use supporting the Council's priorities. Decisions should be taken with all the information and weighing ongoing costs with potential receipts.

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 has been consulted. No concerns have been raised in respect of the disposal.

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 ☐ Involves £100,000 expenditure/income ☐ 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)	

Section 123(1) Local Government Act 1972 (1972 Act) 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.

In coming to decisions in relation to 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.

☐	**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

The cost of bringing the property to a condition suitable for occupation is estimated to be in region of £25,000, excluding unforeseen works that may become apparent during refurbishment.

Any refurbishment project would require capital funding from the General Fund. Given existing pressures on Council budgets and staffing resources, disposal of the property is considered the most financially sustainable option.

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

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 disposal will relieve the Council from any financial and resource implications.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The Council has a constitution and scheme of delegations, which ensure that the decision has the best interest and minimal risks to the Council.
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.	Careful consideration of the cost of refurbishment has been given in coming to the recommendation to dispose, in order for resources to be better used elsewhere.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

Subject to decision, the disposal transaction can be progressed by the solicitors of the parties. Completion of the transaction should be prioritized and take place as soon as possible.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

There is a risk that the proposed purchaser may withdraw prior to completion of the transaction. This risk will be mitigated through prompt progression of legal work and regular engagement with the buyer.

Should the transaction fail to complete, the Council would retain ownership of the property and could undertake a further disposal exercise through open market marketing or an alternative disposal route.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

It is not considered that the disposal has any implications on equality.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

It is not considered that the disposal has any impact of social values. However bringing the property back into use has the potential to improve the appearance and vitality of the area, and may generate wider economic and community benefits through future occupation.

IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DEVOLUTION AND/OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

On 7th September 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced in Parliament that a review of the Local Government Reorganisation programme was commencing and that the decision made in March 2026 for Greater Essex (and other areas) had been withdrawn in light of new legal advice. Following this announcement, local authorities received correspondence from the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government requesting that until this review has concluded, Councils

cease work on implementing the decisions that have previously been announced. The timetable for completion of the review is unknown at this time.

This proposal is not impacted by MHCLG's request, as it supports the Council's effective asset management objectives by removing a redundant asset from the portfolio, reducing maintenance and liability costs, generating a capital receipt and enabling the property to be brought back into productive use.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

The disposal itself has no effect on the emission or absorption of carbon dioxide.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR 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	Vacant and derelict properties can be targets of anti-social behaviour, the disposal of this property should have a positive effect in relation to crime and disorder.
Health Inequalities	The disposal will have progressive effect in relation to the health of people in the local area.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	There are no proposed subsidies.
Area or Ward affected	Walton

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The former public conveniences building is understood to have originally been constructed as a fire station in the early twentieth century. While the building has some local historic interest, Historic England declined an application for statutory listing in 2018.

The property is located on the west side of Mill Lane, close to its junction with High Street. Other nearby occupiers include Aldi, M&S, The Royal British Legion, Borno Pharmacy and several other local commercial occupiers.

The property comprises a detached building, part single storey and part two storey, with estimated accommodation to be approximately 70 square metres. The building has been vacant for several years and has been subject to deterioration and vandalism. It is currently secured by boarding and requires substantial investment before it could be reoccupied.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

Cabinet Report 2017, Adoption of Public Conveniences Strategy for Tendring

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES
Appendix A - Location Plan

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