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COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
16TH JANUARY 2014

Report of the Estates & Facilities Manager

LAND AND PROPERTY DISPOSALS - FORMER ASHBOURNE TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

SUMMARY

The report seeks authority to dispose of the former Ashbourne TIC property at Market Place, Ashbourne.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the freehold of the former Ashbourne TIC property at Market Place, Ashbourne as shown on the plan attached at Appendix 1 is offered for sale on the open market by an estate agent experienced in the sale of such properties, on the terms outlined in paragraph 3.2 of this report.
2. That should the above disposal be by public auction, authority is delegated to the Council's Valuer to set the guide and reserve prices in consultation with the Auctioneers.

WARDS AFFECTED

Ashbourne North

STRATEGIC LINK

The proposed disposal of the former TIC property accords with the core value of achieving 'Value for Money' as expressed in the Corporate Plan 2011 - 15.

1.0 URGENT BUSINESS

- 1.1 This item is being tabled as an item of urgent business in accordance with the Access to Information Provisions in that the matter cannot wait until the next meeting of the natural committee. The Chairman of the Committee has agreed to the reason for urgency and inclusion of the report as an item of business.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of Council in June 2011, Members considered a report on the Development of a Sustainable Financial Plan. At the Council meeting held on 27th October 2011, Members gave further consideration to reducing spending levels across all services and specifically, identified Tourism as an area where savings in the order of £110,000 needed to be achieved.

- 2.2 In order to achieve savings of this magnitude, Members endorsed an approach which sought to change the delivery of tourism services, away from the conventional Tourist Information Centres in favour of developing a network of Partnership Visitor Information Points (VIPs).
- 2.3 The VIP concept is based upon a “hub” and “spoke” framework and offers the potential to deliver tourism services at reduced cost by working closer with the private sector to find new ways to provide visitor information, in locations, which will offer the maximum impact for the minimum financial input.
- 2.4 There are four levels of VIP which vary in level of service provided to visitors, according to location and partnership arrangements.

Level One - VIP with DMS access, Internet, Literature and reference material.

This would be the highest-level VIP where visitors could receive information via face-to-face contact, the DMS and the Internet as well as literature and reference material provided by the District Council. The DMS would be transferred from the TIC to the VIP and the costs would be met by the host. The DMS would enable the host to provide additional services such as current accommodation information, potentially bookings and digital print. The host would be expected to provide a specified level of service to visitors and a Service Level Agreement would be set up between the host and the Council via the District Council.

Training, ongoing servicing, monitoring, management and development would be carried out by the District Council.

The benefit for the host would be the increase in footfall and revenue through sales of literature etc previously sold in the TIC.

Level Two - VIP with Internet, Literature and reference material.

This would be the next level VIP and would follow the model in place at the Peak District Mining Museum. The same details regarding service level agreements, training etc would be applicable as that with the Level One VIP.

Level Three - VIP with Kiosk, Literature and (possibly) reference material.

This VIP would follow the model at Arc and be completely self-service. The District Council would carry out ongoing servicing, monitoring, management and development.

Level Four - VIP Literature only.

This model would consist of literature only and would be completely self-service. The District Council would carry out ongoing servicing, monitoring, management and development.

- 2.5 The Derbyshire Dales network would consist of a “hub” at Matlock Town Hall, which manages and supports VIPs (the “spokes”) at various locations and levels of operation, e.g. the existing Centre at Bakewell. The first phase of VIP implementation was concluded in April 2011 with the closure of Matlock TIC and the establishment of a new ‘Level Two’ VIP at Peak Rail, Matlock Station. This initiative has proved to be a tremendous success and has been recognised through the Community Rail Awards as an example of best practice.
- 2.6 At the meeting of Council held on 27th October 2011, Members agreed a phased approach to the implementation of the VIP network, the key actions of which involved

the retention of Ashbourne TIC until at least March 2013, with the establishment of a Level One or Level Two VIP as soon as possible thereafter.

- 2.7 At the meeting of the Environment Committee on 28th February 2013, Members endorsed the establishment of a VIP at Ashbourne Town Hall in partnership with Ashbourne Town Council. During the intervening period, Ashbourne Town Council have appointed their own tourism staff and works are currently underway at Ashbourne Town Hall to provide a new VIP facility which is to be open in February 2014. Ashbourne Tourist Information Centre closed on Christmas Eve and therefore the premises are now vacant and available for disposal since they are no longer required for operational purposes..

3.0 REPORT

- 3.1 As part of the District Council's Asset Management Plan, the Council has for a number of years, sought to rationalise its property assets where these are no longer required for operational purposes, with a view to maximising capital receipts which may then be utilised to support the Council's priorities and programmes.
- 3.2 Following the closure of Ashbourne TIC, the premises at 13 Market Place, Ashbourne shown edged in heavy black on the plan attached at Appendix 1, which comprises a ground floor retail unit with basement storage and 2 long leasehold flats above falls into this category and it is therefore recommended that it is offered for sale on the open market by an estate agent experienced in the sale of such properties. The purchasers will be responsible for the District Council's reasonable legal costs.
- 3.3 Any offers received for the property will be reviewed by the Council's Valuer in consultation with the estate agents prior to any offer being accepted. Should the disposal be by public auction, the guide and reserve prices to apply at auction will be set by the Council's Valuer in consultation with the Auctioneers prior to the auction.

Consultation

- 3.4 The Ashbourne North Ward Members and Ashbourne Town Council have been consulted on the proposed sale and any comments received will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Other Expressions of Interest

- 3.5 In addition to various general expressions of interest in development sites/opportunities across the District, some specific expressions of interest have been received in this property.

4.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Legal

The District Council has a legal duty to obtain the best price reasonably available which will be delivered by the disposal method outlined in the report. The legal risk is therefore low.

4.2 Financial

The proceeds from the disposal of the former Ashbourne TIC will be a capital receipt, and will be available to finance other schemes within the capital programme. The proposal will also remove a potential maintenance liability. The financial risk is, therefore, assessed as "low".

5.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

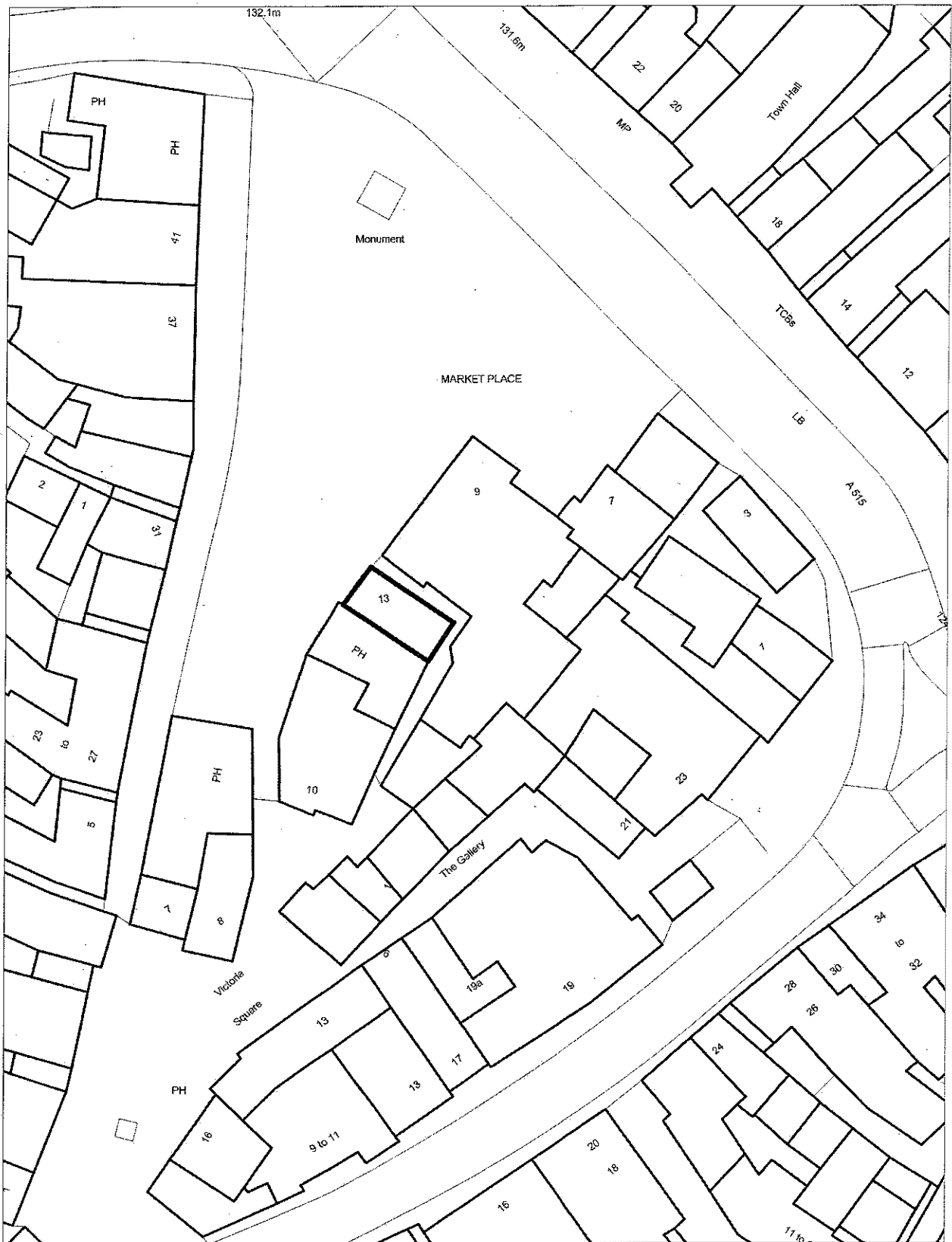
In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

6.0 CONTACT INFORMATION

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7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Report – Development of a Sustainable Financial Plan	22 nd June 2011
Council Report - Development of a Sustainable Financial Plan	27 th October 2011
Environment Committee Report – Ashbourne Tourist Information Centre	28 th February 2013



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