

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: John Pell; Director of Community Services

REPORT NO. PPER.001

DATE: 31st August 2004

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| TITLE: | Disposal of land at Swingbridge Road, Grantham |
| FORWARD PLAN ITEM: | |
| DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN: | |
| KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL: | Key decision |

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| COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION: | Community Affairs / Vulnerable People Cllr John Smith; Economic Portfolio (relevant portfolio holder in relation to property disposal) |
| CORPORATE PRIORITY: | Vulnerable Persons |
| CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS: | No significant implications |
| FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS: | None |
| BACKGROUND PAPERS: | None |

1. INTRODUCTION

This report makes recommendations about the disposal of land at Swingbridge Road, Grantham, to Surestart. It is recommended that the land be disposed of below its unrestricted value; which would effectively represent a District Council contribution-in-kind towards the delivery of a Surestart Centre on the site. The District Council is the Lead Partner for the Surestart programme within Grantham, and the delivery of a Surestart Centre in the Earlesfield ward (and similar provision within the Harrowby area) is consistent with the delivery plan submitted in September 2003.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the land as identified on the attached plan (or such amended site as may be required for the purposes of a Surestart Centre), be disposed of, at less than best price in accordance with the General Disposal Consent 2003, for a nominal sum, for the purposes of ensuring the delivery of a Surestart centre, subject to appropriate covenants relating to future usage, delivery etc, subject to no adverse representations as a result of advertisement (disposal of open space) and subject to all relevant Council costs being met.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

The SureStart ethos is about making life better for children, parents and communities by bringing together:

- ➤ Early education
- ➤ Childcare
- ➤ Health and family support

Surestart is a government initiative dedicated to giving children 0-5 and their families the best possible start in life. The District Council is the lead partner, with Lincolnshire County Council being the accountable body. A delivery plan, submitted in September 2003 anticipated the provision of two centres, one in the Earlesfield ward, and one in Harrowby ward, together with supporting office accommodation.

The purpose of children's centres is to provide the most convenient access to a range of services for families. The ideal Sure Start Children's Centre is a single building on or close to a primary school site, and within pram pushing distance of the families it serves. The Children's Centre in Earlesfield will be a triangle of three buildings next to each other, made up of Spitalgate Primary School, The Neighbourhood Nursery, and the new Sure Start building. Between the three buildings the following services would be provided:

High quality environment for babies and children up to school age to receive full day, all year round care, integrated with early education. This is being

provided by the new Neighbourhood Nursery on Trent Road, who may partner with Spitalgate School.

A range of multi purpose rooms to enable parent and child and childminder drop-ins, group activities, health and ante-natal care and classes, surgeries for Jobcentre Plus/training providers, welfare rights, etc. and access to a crèche to support to these activities. This will be provided in the proposed Sure Start building.

The Sure Start building will ensure information is available to all families with young children in the locality and ensure that outreach is provided to those reluctant to use services.

Health and Family Support will also be delivered from the new Sure Start building.

Sure Start Grantham is currently in year 2 of a 10 year programme. To help ensure that the services delivered from the building are sustainable when Sure Start funding tails off, the plan is to offer much needed office space at the building for Health Visitors and School Nurses. This will encourage more joint working, provide more services for the local families and importantly generate revenue to sustain the Sure Start Centre.

Management Arrangements – Currently Sure Start Grantham is managed by the Sure Start Grantham Management Board, made up of partner organisations (the service providers) and parents (the service users), and undergoes assessments by the Regional Sure Start Unit based in Nottingham. This is changing, all Sure Start local programmes have to apply for Sure Start Children's Centre status by March 2006. Sure Start Children's Centres will be managed by Children's and Family Partnership Boards. This board will grow out of the current Sure Start Management Board. The Children's and Family Partnership Board will report to the 'South West Local Implementation Team', who in turn report to the county wide 'Children's Modernisation Team' – this is made up of key organisations who meet to plan services for children. Lincolnshire County Council have been given responsibility to co-ordinate the Children's Centres Plan for Lincolnshire. Whilst represented upon the Management Board and contributing to the strategic direction of the organisation, and providing complementary support functions, this Council's role is otherwise as a supportive partner-organisation

There are two particularly strong reasons why this site has been identified:

1. The Sure Start Children's Centre needs to be on a site where the services will be accessed - Consultations have taken place with local parents and partners about possible sites and a strong view has emerged that this site was central to other services. This site is close to the community centre, local shops, the youth centre, the primary school, and the doctor's surgery, as well as the recently erected day-nursery.
2. Government guidance promotes siting on or very near to a school site and on or close to the childcare element of the core offer. The partner

primary school is Spitalgate Primary School, and the childcare element is being provided by the new Neighbourhood Nursery Centre of Excellence on Trent Road.

The land, which has an area of approximately 0.125 ha, is situated adjacent the Doctors Surgery on Swingbridge Road (see attached plan). Designated as housing land from the inception of the Earlesfield estate, the land has been recently declared surplus to housing requirements, and as such is available for use for alternative purposes.

The land appears eminently suitable for the proposed Surestart Centre, particularly given the relationship of the site to other community and nursery facilities. The District Valuer has ascribed an open market value to the site. Whilst it is clearly open to the Council to seek to recover up to that valuation, under its general powers of well-being, and given the leading role the Council has played in the establishment of the Surestart programme in Grantham, Cabinet may consider it appropriate to dispose in this instance for a nominal sum; that discounting effectively representing a contribution in kind towards the delivery of the centre.

Whilst a number of disposal options exist, in terms of for example, leasing, a freehold disposal is considered to be preferred. Any disposal could be appropriately covenanted to ensure use solely for the purposes of providing a Surestart Centre. A pre-emption clause would also be appropriate to ensure that in the event of non-delivery of the centre, the land could revert to this Council. . The nature of the relationship between Surestart and the Accountable Body (Lincolnshire County Council) is such that disposal would, by necessity, be to the County Council.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND ASSESSED

Whilst it is recommended that the land be disposed of for a nominal sum, an alternative valuation could be imposed, up to the unrestricted value identified by the District Valuer. However, the District Council, as Lead Partner of the Surestart programme has been fully supportive of the objectives of the programme, which will clearly enhance community well-being within what are recognised to be disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and, is consistent with the Council's broader aims and objectives. Disposal at nominal value, essentially represents a grant to the open market value of the land, towards the development of the centre.

A number of alternative locations in the locality have been considered. However, the present site, due to its close relationship to other community facilities, is considered to be the optimal location.

4. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND STRATEGIC RESOURCES

None received

5. COMMENTS OF CORPORATE MANAGER, DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL SERVICES (MONITORING OFFICER)

The Council has the ability to dispose at less than best price in accordance with the General Disposal Consent 2003, provided it is satisfied the disposal is for the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the whole or part of its area and the undervalue can be shown to be less than £2m. The disposal of open space must be advertised and objections considered by the relevant DSP.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

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Head of Planning Policy & Economic Regeneration