

Record of Decision

Echo Building, St James Road, Torquay - Consideration of Community Proposal

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 17 September 2019

Decision

- (i) that the Interim Director of Place be requested to explore with King's Arms Church Charity if it would be more appropriate to enter into a long lease at nil cost to the charity to enable them to invest the proposed £30,000 purchase cost, in delivering community projects sooner, especially in respect of work around foster carers, and if this is a more appropriate option to revise the report to Council to reflect this proposal which was supported by the Cabinet; and
- (ii) that, subject to the outcome of (i) above, the Cabinet recommend to the Council that the Interim Director of Place, in consultation with the Chief Executive, be authorised to dispose of the freehold interest of land and building known as the Echo Building, St James Road, Torquay, as shown on Plan EM3127 set out at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, at below market value to the King's Arms Church Charity. The disposal will include a suitable provision that will enable the Council to recover any uplift in value should the community group dispose of the building at a future point for any alternative use.

Reason for the Decision

The proposed purchaser had submitted a financial offer of £30,000 for the freehold ownership of the land and building known as the Echo Building, St James Road, Torquay. This offer was considered to be below the market value of the property, which was estimated to be circa £85,000. The proposed purchaser had provided evidence demonstrating how projects and initiatives intended to be implemented at the property would offset the difference between the market value and the offer made.

Implementation

The recommendation of the Cabinet will be considered at the Council meeting on 26 September 2019.

Information

At the Cabinet meeting held on 23 July 2019 the Cabinet agreed to extend the time for the community to come up with a suitable proposal and bid for the Echo Building, St James Road, Torquay to ensure continued community use, under the Council's Asset of Community Value Policy, by three months (Minute 9.1/7/19 refers). This period has now elapsed and the Council has received a proposal from King's Arms Church Charity as set out in the submitted report. Peter Clayton, Pastor from the King's Arms Charity attended the meeting and outlined his aspirations for the use of the Echo Building which focussed around working with the community to improve outcomes for vulnerable people.

The proposal included the following:

- Working with Home for Good (Foster Group) to help provide more foster carers within Torbay.
- Weekly Coffee morning – aimed specifically at those suffering from social isolation and loneliness.
- Become a partner with 'Homes for Good', to promote adoption and fostering in Torbay amongst local churches.
- Use of the building for local community buildings.
- Set up a baby bank for the provision of second hand clothes and donations to be distributed to those in need.
- Set up weekly children and / or youth club.
- Set up weekly parent / carer and toddler groups.
- The building would become the office base for the church.

As the proposal is below market value the Council's Asset Management Plan requires this to be a Council decision as it would be contrary to this Policy Framework document.

It was suggested that a long lease could be offered for the Echo Building at nil cost instead of the disposing of the asset via a freehold which may enable the Kings Arms Church Charity to use their proposed investment to accelerate delivery of community support and particularly in respect of foster carers as this could save the Council significant amounts of money if this resulted in increased foster care places within Torbay.

Councillor Law proposed and Councillor Cowell seconded a motion which was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

Alternative options were set out in the submitted report but not discussed at the meeting.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

No

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None

Published

20 September 2019

Signed: _____
Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Date: 18 September 2019