

Record of Decisions

Purchase of Employment Land

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 21 September 2021.

Decision

1. That delegated authority be given to the S151 officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance, Regeneration, Housing and Tourism, that once a business case has been presented to him that meets the Growth Fund criteria, to authorise allocation from the Growth Fund an amount equal to the negotiated price as set out in exempt appendix 1, in order to acquire Wilkin's Drive employment site.
2. TDA to be instructed to market the site and develop a scheme that is aimed at businesses above business rate threshold.

Reason for the Decision

The reasons for the decision are to:

- Ensure Torbay's employment land is protected and used for its intended purpose as set out in the Local Plan and support job growth.
- Ensure Torbay has adequate supply of employment land to accommodate local growth and inward investment.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 4 October 2021 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

In 2017 the Council agreed to acquire land at Wilkin's Drive, Paignton, to enable the building of a school, subject to Education and Skills Funding Agency approval of the site, and subsequent funding. However, the way government assessed pupil need had changed meaning Paignton was no longer a priority area and therefore not likely to receive funding for a school. As a result, the original Council decision was null and void, however the proposal to support the acquisition should be pursued, through the Growth Fund, for land at Wilkin's Drive, Paignton, for employment use. Business support activity undertaken by Torbay Economic Development Company Limited (trading as TDA) had shown that demand for employment land/accommodation from Torbay's growing businesses as well as inward investment enquiries outstripped supply. As a result, acquiring Wilkin's Drive is essential to accommodate this growth.

At the meeting Councillor Long proposed and Councillor Cowell seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

Two options were considered:

- To acquire the site as set out in the submitted report and realise the economic benefits, whilst recognising there are some financial risks.
- To not acquire the site. This option did not present a financial risk to the Council but could present economic risks as the landowners had indicated that they might seek a change of use.

Is this a Key Decision?

No – Reference Number: I085142

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

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

None.

Published

September 2021

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