

**Meeting:** Cabinet

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022

**Wards affected:** Preston and wider Paignton wards

**Report Title:** Future use of Parkfield House and Grounds for Community Development

**When does the decision need to be implemented?** As soon as possible

**Cabinet Member Contact Details:** Councillor Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism & Housing, 07419 111618, [Swithin.Long@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Swithin.Long@torbay.gov.uk)

**Director Contact Details:** Kevin Mowat, Director of Place, 01803 208433, [Kevin.Mowat@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Kevin.Mowat@torbay.gov.uk)

**Supporting Officer Contact Details:** Becky Morgan, Partnership Development Manager, 07795290974. [Becky.Morgan@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Becky.Morgan@torbay.gov.uk)

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## 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1 The Parkfield Project Board seeks Cabinet approval in principle to dispose of land and buildings at Parkfield, Esplanade Road, Paignton; their being surplus to the Council's requirements and a valuable community asset which could be brought back into use for the benefit of Torbay residents (particularly children and young people).
- 1.2 It is particularly important to create a valuable community asset that will benefit and have a positive impact on children and young people in the Bay.
- 1.3 The Council wishes to dispose of the site to a partner or group of partners in the non-profit sector, who will develop it to achieve an agreed set of strategic outcomes. This disposal could be by way of a long leasehold arrangement of a minimum 25 years or by way of a Community Asset Transfer. In either case, the Council would retain ownership of the site, but management and development responsibility would be handed over to the recipient organisations; with the Council maintaining some oversight.

## 2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

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- 2.1 We want Torbay and its residents to thrive.

- 2.2 We want Torbay to be a place where we have turned the tide on poverty and tackled inequalities; where our children and older people will have high aspirations and where there are quality jobs, good pay, and affordable housing for our residents.
- 2.3 We want Torbay to be the premier resort in the UK, with a vibrant arts and cultural offer for our residents and visitors to enjoy; where our built and natural environment is celebrated and where we play our part in addressing the climate change emergency.
- 2.4 One of the principles of Torbay Council Asset Management Strategy 2022 – 2027 is to work collaboratively and promote joint working with Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations to identify wider opportunities to benefit the community.
- 2.5 Local people are often best placed to manage community facilities in their area. They already make excellent use of these assets with local knowledge and hands on management, often resulting in lower overheads and better value for money outcomes. Community organisations can lever in significant funding and are also able to use volunteers to run facilities.
- 2.6 Community groups should be encouraged to take ownership of assets and have great pride in their local area. Managing these facilities can help empower local communities and can bring opportunities for greater independence and financial sustainability. A disposal of Parkfield and some of the wider grounds demonstrates the Council's commitment to using appropriate assets to form long term partnerships with suitable voluntary, community and sports organisations.

### 3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

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- 3.1 Cabinet confirm an in-principle decision to dispose of Parkfield House by way of a leasehold disposal or community asset transfer on terms to be agreed.
- 3.2 That the Director of Place, in consultation with Parkfield House Project Board by authorised to seek Expressions of Interest from Community Partners to ascertain interest from the community in taking on the site by way of a leasehold disposal or community asset transfer. The Parkfield House Framework, attached as Appendix 1, will be used to shape and inform the Expressions of Interest and the Director of Place will seek detailed business cases from those Community Partners who are shortlisted.
- 3.3 On receipt and review of the detailed business cases from Community Partners the Director of Place, in consultation with Parkfield House Project Board, will make recommendations regarding disposal of the asset, which will be subject to final approval by Cabinet. It is anticipated that a recommendation can be made to Cabinet in November 2022 for disposal of the asset to a preferred partner(s).

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Parkfield House Framework

### **Background Documents**

Figure 1: Map of the Parkfield site with current occupancy

# Supporting Information

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 Parkfield House has been used operationally for many years most recently by Children Services and the Youth Offending Team. Leading up to and through the COVID period it has become clear that the building has been under – utilised. Children Services has now declared the building surplus to its service requirements and the Corporate Asset Management Group have confirmed that others Council services are not in need of the building. An Emerging Issue Paper was presented to Cabinet on 7th December 2021. It is now apparent given its locality and nature of the building there is potential as a community asset to support the wellbeing of our residents.
- 1.2 Torbay Council's objective is therefore to undertake an exercise to explore whether a long leasehold disposal and/or Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of the Parkfield site, to a partner or group of partners in the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise sector; would be of interest. Any disposal would be set against an agreed set of strategic outcomes. Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is a change in management of land or buildings from public bodies (e.g. local authorities) to community and voluntary sector groups, such as a social enterprise, a Community Interest Company etc. for less than market value to achieve a local social, economic or environmental benefit.
- 1.3 The Parkfield House Project Board will work collaboratively with community partners to help shape and inform their Expressions of Interest and to form their detailed business cases, prior to the shortlisting process. This process will include the opportunity to create a head lease for the potential partner or group of partners in the non-profit sector, which could incorporate the existing tenants as sub-tenants, and their associated rental streams, into the development of the relevant business cases. Cabinet would need to consider the loss of income from the Council's general fund if these rents were made available as income to a new community partner under a long lease.
- 1.4 Torbay Council is committed to working in partnership with our communities and recognises that our community partners possess a vast range of skills, experience and knowledge; which make them ideally placed to reinvigorate Parkfield for the benefit of local people. We also recognise that a creative, innovative approach is needed to ensure that Parkfield as an asset can be brought back into use in a way which is sustainable for the long term.
- 1.5 The aim in undertaking an appropriate disposal/Community Asset Transfer in this way is:
  - To ensure that Parkfield can be used to support the delivery of positive wellbeing outcomes for Torbay residents; both now and in future.
  - To ensure that Parkfield is developed in a way which is both community-led and sustainable; both financially and environmentally.

- To endeavour to safeguard the Parkfield site as a community asset, and if possible, to avoid commercial development of it in future.
- To demonstrate a commitment by this administration to working in partnership with the community, for the community.

1.6 The scope of a leasehold transfer would include the following areas shown on the attached Site Plan:

1 - BMX Track

4 – Parkfield House Stable Block

5 – Parkfield House

6 – Community woodland

7 – Remainder

Pedestrian and vehicular rights of way

The Council would be willing to explore through a head lease arrangement, the inclusion of the areas currently occupied by Torbay Education Limited (2, 2a and 2b) and Natural Environment Services (3).

1.7 Parkfield House is a Grade II listed building, which presents both opportunities and challenges. We want to ensure that any partner(s) taking on the site are fully sighted on the implications of this. The most recent Asset Condition Survey was completed in 2019. A further update has been commissioned and will be provided as soon as possible. The survey will outline the current condition of the building. We will recommend that partner(s) read this thoroughly and consider the practical and financial implications of this, as part of their planning. We will also provide a guidance note on managing a Listed building. This will set out the restrictions and challenges and highlight the importance of being a custodian of a Listed building.

1.8 Significant preparatory work has already been undertaken to support a disposal to a partner or group of partners in the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise sector:

- A detailed project plan and timeline is in place to ensure a robust and transparent process for deciding which partner(s) should take over management of the site.
- Engagement with interested parties, including Paignton Community Partnership and various community sector partners who are interested in taking on the site (either individually or as a collaborative).

- A draft framework has been developed, setting out the strategic outcomes the site should deliver and the parameters within which partner(s) and Council would work together.

1.9 Approval to dispose of Parkfield House would support a number of objectives:

- To ensure that Parkfield can be used to support the delivery of positive wellbeing outcomes for Torbay residents, both now and in future.
- To ensure that Parkfield is developed in a way which is both community-led and sustainable; both financially and environmentally.
- To safeguard the Parkfield site as a community asset, and to avoid commercial development of it in future.
- To demonstrate a commitment by this administration to working in partnership with

## 2. Options under consideration

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2.1 None.

## 3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

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3.1 At present, the repair and maintenance costs of the site are prohibitive to the Council and will only increase the longer the site is disused.

3.2 At the last survey in November 2019, the estimated cost of repairs to the building was in the region of £20,000 (£5,000 of which were urgent; these have largely been undertaken now). A new survey will be undertaken upon approval of this proposal, to ensure the most up to date information can be provided to partner(s).

3.3 Disposal would enable the Council to release this liability, the receiving organisation(s) would have the opportunity to generate income from the site not only to restore it but also to develop it further in the long term, in line with agreed conditions. There is potential for the site to become self-sustaining, or even generate additional revenue which could be reinvested into further developments under the right management services.

3.4 Notwithstanding the restrictive covenants, an open disposal to the market might produce a higher offer in terms of passing rent or an upfront premium for a long lease term. Therefore, the recommended disposal route might not produce 'best value' from a financial perspective but a successful disposal to a community-based partner is likely to produce indirect financial benefits and significant 'social value' for many years.

- 3.5 If a new head lease were created and the rent from the existing tenants were to benefit the new head tenant then Cabinet would need to consider the impact of the loss of income from the Council's general fund.

## 4. Legal Implications

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- 4.1 There are no legal implications with this proposal.

## 5. Engagement and Consultation

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- 5.1 Formal consultation is not required; extensive engagement has already taken place over the last several years and is on-going through this process. A communications and engagement plan will be integral to this project.

As part of their proposals, partners wishing to take on the site will be asked to describe how they will engage with the local residents, in particular children and young people, to ensure that the development of the site is informed by community feedback on an ongoing basis.

The following representation is included on the Project Board:

- Children's Services (Nancy Meehan)
- Place (Kevin Mowat)
- Adult and Community Services (Joanna Williams)
- Elected Members and Regeneration (Cllr Swithin Long)
- TDA (Paul Palmer)

## 6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

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- 6.1 Not applicable.

## 7. Tackling Climate Change

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- 7.1 In line with Torbay Council's Community and Corporate Plan, we are committed to tackling the Climate Emergency and working with others to create a Carbon Neutral Community. We are also committed to protecting the natural environment in Torbay, which is one of our greatest assets.

We would like any development of Parkfield to contribute towards these aims by:

- (i) Ensuring that waste is minimised, and recycling/repurposing is maximised.

- (ii) Ensuring that opportunities for energy efficiency are explored and implemented where feasible.
- (iii) Ensuring that the grounds are used and maintained in a way which is good for wildlife and provides habitat for animals, birds, and insects.
- (iv) Ensuring that any food provided on the site is sustainably produced.

Due to the amount of green space on the site, it presents plentiful opportunities to provide community activities which support our aims of becoming a Carbon Neutral Community, and we would welcome inclusion of such activities in any proposals.

## 8. Associated Risks

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- 8.1 The associated risk of disposal to a community partner is if that partner lacks the necessary experience, skills and financial acumen to deliver the anticipated community outcomes identified with the disposal. This could ultimately lead to a potential early surrender of the asset back to the Council.
- 8.2 To mitigate this possibility the Council will require a detailed business and delivery plan. This will include information on the outcomes, aims, objectives and targets the proposal would deliver, including how these would be monitored and assessed over the life of the project. This will also include an indicative 5-year capital and revenue budget plan including all anticipated grant funding, identifying whether this had already been secured and any other income expected, sources etc.

## 9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

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	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	A community asset will have a positive impact.		
People with caring Responsibilities			There is no differential impact.
People with a disability			There is no differential impact.
Women or men			There is no differential impact.
People who are black or from a minority ethnic			There is no differential impact.

background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			There is no differential impact.
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			There is no differential impact.
People who are transgendered			There is no differential impact.
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			There is no differential impact.
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			There is no differential impact.
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	A community asset will have a positive impact.		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)			There is no differential impact.

## 10. Cumulative Council Impact

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10.1 None.

## 11. Cumulative Community Impacts

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11.1 None.