

Eye Town Council

16th September 2020

Report from Asset Committee

Development of Land at Victoria Mill - Appointment of Advisers

Background

1. The Town Council owns land at Victoria Mill which has been allocated for residential development in the Eye Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan is now a major material consideration in Planning decisions and the principle of development of the site is now established.
2. The Town Council has supported the allocation of the site for residential development and agreed to consider the possibility of selling the allotment land for the best value price at its meeting on the 18th April 2018.
3. This report concerns the northern part of the site which is allocated for 15 affordable dwellings and 19 market houses. This can be developed before the southern part of the site which is currently in use for allotments and would require an alternative allotments site to
4. The development of the site is dependent on access being provided from the surrounding land which has permission for 265 homes. It is understood that a reserved matters application that will for example fix various access points is imminent and that development will start in early 2021 year and complete the first phase of 136 homes by 2023.
5. Various potential developers of Victoria Mill North have been approached to gauge buyer interest. Two well known local providers of affordable housing have expressed a strong interest.

Procurement of Professional Advice

6. At its Extra Ordinary Meeting held on the 7th August 2020 Council approved the procurement of professional advice on the options and terms of sale of land at Victoria Mill North (as proposed in the Eye Neighbourhood Plan Policy Eye 6) up to £10,000 through a means of funding yet to be identified and agreed.
7. It is important the Town Council maintains a dialogue with all relevant parties to ensure its interests are protected and that it achieves best value for its asset. Some of this work can be undertaken through existing staff but some aspects will need additional Professional advice and services including:
 - a. The process of selecting a preferred buyer including preferred contractual arrangements taking into account the Council's objectives for the site and its value.
 - b. Detailed negotiations with a preferred buyer regarding those arrangements and values.
 - c. Negotiation of the ransom strip with the owner of the surrounding land (the current owner intends to retain a ransom strip around the Victoria Mill site.
 - d. Such other professional work as may be required to facilitate the development and sale of the site.
 - e. Legal costs of sale agreements.
8. A fee proposal has been requested from four potential suppliers of this professional advice. Bidwells and the District Auditor have declined the opportunity, but proposals have been

received from Brown and Co and Lacy, Scott and Knight. As they are commercial in confidence, they will be available to members of the Council only.

9. Funded from either Council reserves or a Public Works Loan.
10. It is proposed that interviews are held with both of the Proposers to make a selection of the one offering best value.
11. It will be necessary to consider the requirement for any professional services not covered by the proposals that are needed to facilitate the sale and development of the site and to maximise its value.

Recommendation

12. It is recommended that Cllrs Evitt, Berry and Gould be delegated to interview and select a professional property adviser from the two proposals received.
13. It is recommended that Cllrs Evitt, Berry and Gould be delegated to identify any additional professional services required, such as the production of site drawings, to assist the Council in obtaining best value for the site.