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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">Executive 11 August 2010</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Director of Children and Families</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Ward affected: Fryent</p> | |
| <p>Former Scouts Hall Site, Coniston Gardens, Kingsbury NW9</p> | |

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 At their meeting of January 2010 the Executive were presented with two options in respect of the former scouts' hut site on 2 Coniston Gardens, NW9 OBB (adjacent to Oliver Goldsmith Primary School): to dispose of the site to a Housing Association for the provision of two large family homes or to retain the land within the council's portfolio and develop Extended Services from the site. The Executive agreed at that meeting to dispose of the site to a Housing Association.
- 1.2 This report provides the Executive with an update on that decision and recommends that the decision be revoked and the site be retained within the council's portfolio for educational and community use.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is recommended to:

- 2.1 Revoke the decision made by the January 2010 Executive meeting to dispose of the site to a Housing Association and instead to retain the site within the Council's portfolio for educational and community use;
- 2.2 Instruct officers to re-engage with Oliver Goldsmith Primary School and various Council service areas to establish the potential service options and appropriate funding streams available to support the development and sustainable use of the site for the local community and/or educational purposes;

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The site is situated at the junction of Coniston Gardens and Kingsbury Road and is shown on the attached location plan edged red. It is adjacent to Oliver Goldsmith Primary School. The site is currently occupied by a hut that was formerly used by the Scouts Association. The Association vacated this site in 2007. The hut is in a derelict state,

beyond repair and presents Health and Safety risks in its current condition. The remainder of the site is overgrown with brambles, sycamore trees and weeds.

- 3.2 The Executive's earlier decision to dispose of the site to a Housing Association allowed for a proposed scheme comprising 2 five bedroomed houses that could accommodate up to 9 persons each. Since that decision in January 2010, the funding and financial regime supporting social housing and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) has tightened with less funding available for schemes. It is therefore unlikely that a housing scheme on this site will be sustainably funded. The Housing Association identified for the sale of the site has withdrawn interest due to the passage of time and changes to the grant funding regime and property market.
- 3.3 As the original decision to dispose of the site can no longer be implemented, officers have reviewed the potential future use of the site with Councillors, Oliver Goldsmith Primary School and the local Residents Association. A recommendation is now made to this Executive to revoke the previous decision to dispose of the site and instead to retain the site within the Council's portfolio for education and community use. The use of the site for housing or educational/ community is one for members to determine and either use is consistent with the Council's corporate aims. The change in the housing funding position tilts the balance in favour of retaining the site for educational and community use.
- 3.4 In the short term, the proposal is to demolish the existing scout hut and to secure the site. Officers in Property and Asset Management are currently commissioning this work under the Head of Service's estate management responsibilities in order to ensure health and safety risks are addressed. It is expected that this work will take place during October. Once the site is cleared the short term proposal is to incorporate it as part of the Oliver Goldsmith Primary School grounds and for the school to use it as a wildlife garden or similar until such time as alternative proposals for education/community use can be agreed. The school would manage the site at during this period.
- 3.5 In the longer term, the school with officers, the local community and Councillors will draw up proposals for how the site could be used more effectively for education and community use. These proposals would include a review of available capital funding to invest in new facilities as well as revenue funding for the ongoing and sustainable operation of services. A further report will be brought to the Executive to approve these proposals once developed.
- 3.6 Oliver Goldsmith Primary School supports these recommendations and welcomes the retention of this land for education and community use. The school is committed to identifying available funds to support any development and to manage the site at least in the short term. The local Residents Association also supports both the short and long term plans.

- 3.7 For information, it is unlikely at this time that the site could be used for the purposes of statutory education. The school currently has two forms of entry and there are no plans to expand pupil numbers. The current pressure for additional school places is not in the Kingsbury area. It is appropriate and in line with the recommendations in this report that the site should be used to enhance education and community use activities. This is in line with the Government's Extended Services for schools programme. The needs of children and young people related to the Extended Services core offer are identified by the Kingsbury Locality Partnership Board and at the time of the last report in January 2010, the Board had identified leisure opportunities for young people and support for parents to raise young people's attainment as priorities for the locality.
- 3.8 A feasibility study of the site was carried out in January 2010 with the school to look at the option of providing a new extended services building and the estimated total cost was £725,000. There are currently insufficient resources available to make this investment hence the two staged approach to the proposal.
- 3.9 It is likely that any new building on the school site would have to be managed by the school. This would require the school having the significant operational resources required to ensure that the facility was available before, during and after school, during the evenings, at weekends and through school holidays. A full business case would be prepared.

Risks

- 3.10 There are risks associated with the recommendations made in this report, these will be managed by officers and are outlined below:
- Inability to reach stakeholder agreement on services/activities that meet local need for the longer term proposal
 - Insufficient capital funds to construct a new building on the site
 - Insufficient revenue funds to ensure sustainable operation of any new building
- 3.11 The risks outlined above are partially addressed by the two staged approach which secures the site and retains it under school site management and use while viable options for more effective and wide ranging education/community use are explored.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Terms for the disposal of this site to a Housing Association were agreed earlier this year in principle which would have resulted in a capital receipt of around £150,000 plus s106 contributions of approximately £74,000 together with the creation of two large family sized units. Should the site be retained by the council the capital receipt, section 106 contributions and the residential nomination rights would not then be available from this site.

4.2 In respect of funding for any longer term proposal for use of the site for education/community uses there are currently no identified capital funding streams available.

4.3 The costs of the demolition of the scout hut and the incorporation of the land into the school site will be met from existing maintenance budgets

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council has the power under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land in its ownership. However, when it disposes of a freehold interest, it must do so for the best consideration reasonably obtainable unless it obtains the consent of the Secretary of State to a disposal at a lesser value. However, in this case the Head of Property and Asset Management was satisfied that a disposal to a registered social landlord for the construction of affordable housing, would have achieved the best consideration reasonably obtainable, since in current market conditions, a disposal for open market housing would not generate a higher receipt. A decision not to proceed with a disposal to a RSL will obviously mean that the Council will not obtain the anticipated receipt. It will also forego the affordable housing units which would have been built on the site and would have been available for tenants nominated by the Council.

6.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None for the immediate purposes of this report.

7.0 STAFFING/ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Location Plan attached at appendix 1.

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