

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

17 June 2022

**Durham County Council Headquarters
Alternative Options Assessment**



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with an opportunity to comment on Cabinet's report of 27 April 2022 on options for the location of the Council's Headquarters functions and use of its estate should the Council not occupy the Sands site in Durham City.

Executive summary

- 2 On 27 April 2022 Cabinet considered a report setting out the disposal of the newly constructed building on the Sands site in Durham City. The report also contained options for an alternative Headquarters and office accommodation and considered strategic employment site proposals for Aykley Heads.
- 3 Cabinet subsequently agreed to dispose of the newly constructed building at the Sands site in Durham City and, amongst other matters, agreed an alternative Headquarters and office accommodation option.
- 4 A copy of Cabinet's report from April 2022 is attached at Appendix 2 together with the Cabinet's decision at Appendix 3.

Recommendation(s)

- 5 COSMB is recommended to:

- (a) Consider and comment on the outcome of the options appraisal report considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 27 April 2022.

Background

- 6 Cabinet agreed to review options for the newly constructed Durham County Council Headquarters at the Sands site in June 2021. In September 2021, Cabinet made recommendations about the future of the Council's estates and Headquarter functions. Further work on alternative options for office accommodation and civic space for the Council was then undertaken.
- 7 The report to Cabinet in April 2022 set out a proposal to dispose of the newly constructed building on the Sands site taking into account the key business case requirements and value for money including economic, financial, commercial, management and strategic options.
- 8 Cabinet agreed an alternative accommodation strategy consisting of occupation of the building currently under construction at Plot C, Aykley Heads, a new build civic centre incorporating a conferencing facility at Plot D, Aykley Heads and the refurbishment of the former Customer Access Point building at Front Street, Stanley.
- 9 The Cabinet report set out details of the disposal of the building on the Sands site to Durham University to be developed as their Business School. Cabinet agreed the disposal subject to planning approval for the change of use and if the University does not acquire the site within the agreed timescales the Council would occupy the building.

Role of COSMB

- 10 Scrutiny's role is to scrutinise decisions of the executive, to hold them to account and make recommendations on policy development and implementation.
- 11 At the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 10 February 2022 during discussion of the MTFP 2022/23 to 2025/26 and revenue and capital budget 2022/23, the Chair gave a commitment that the proposals on the Headquarters would be considered by the Board once the feasibility study had been considered by Cabinet.
- 12 This meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is to update members on the outcome of the options appraisal and decision made by Cabinet at their meeting in April 2022.
- 13 Cabinet considered two reports at the meeting in April 2022, the publicly accessible report is attached as Appendix 2. The second report is not publicly available as it contains information which is exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It has been the custom and practice of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to only meeting in practice, to help promote an

open and transparent approach to scrutiny. The Chair of the Board would like to maintain this approach so far as is possible and therefore, the Board will consider the public report. Members of the Board are however, entitled to access the exempt report as set out in the Access to Information procedure rules in Part 4 of the Constitution. This approach is consistent with that taken recently by the Board in respect of the Cabinet's proposals for the DLI Museum.

- 14 The Cabinet report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and the Corporate Director of Resources on 27 April 2022 is attached at Appendix 2. The relevant decision of Cabinet is also attached as Appendix 3.

Background papers

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The role of scrutiny is summarised in the main body of the report.

Finance

None

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Appendix 2:
