

## Land and Property Disposal Policy

To: Assets and Procurement Committee

Meeting Date: 11 March 2026

From: Executive Director of Finance and Resources

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Executive Summary: The Council's property disposal processes were reviewed through relevant committees in 2014, 2017 and 2018. This policy will replace all previous guidance and provide a clear, transparent process and framework for Members and officers to adhere to in the disposal of land and property.

All land and property disposals are carried out within the delegations of the Council's Constitution and adherence to the legislative requirements for achieving best consideration within Section 123 of Local Government Act 1972.

It is a recommendation within the delivery plan of the Land and Property Strategy 2024-29, refreshed at A&P Committee in January 2026 that a Land and Property Disposal Policy would be developed and brought forward for Committee approval.

Recommendation: That Assets and Procurement Committee is recommended to approve the Land and Property Disposal Policy and the appendices accompanying the Policy.

Officer contact:  
Name: Chris Ramsbottom  
Post: Service Director Property  
Email: [chris.ramsbottom@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:chris.ramsbottom@cambridgeshire.gov.uk),

# 1. Creating a healthy, fair and sustainable Cambridgeshire

- 1.1 The Land and Property Disposal Policy will enable and deliver outcomes which will both directly and indirectly contribute to the Council's three ambitions and their twelve ambition priorities through the disposal of surplus land and property to provide capital receipts and revenue savings which will support wider service delivery.
- 1.2 The main ambitions this policy will contribute to are:
  - **Support a green and sustainable county:** Low carbon council, tackling climate risks, and restoring nature.
  - **Enable full healthy lives for all:** Active living, and independent living.
  - **Ensure fairness and opportunity wherever we can:** the best start in life for children and young people and well connected.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The disposal policy provides an update to the existing land and property disposal processes which were previously reviewed in 2014, 2017 and 2018. The new policy document is supported by several appendices.
- 2.2 On 21 March 2024, the Assets & Procurement Committee approved the Land & Property Strategy 2024-29. This strategy established a framework for the safe, effective, efficient, and environmentally sustainable management of the Council's property assets, enabling a structured response to service needs and priorities, with a key principle to challenge all assets with a potential recommendation for disposal.
- 2.3 The disposal policy will promote the disposal of assets which will support the council's Strategic Framework and Council Change Strategy, is aligned with the Land and Property Strategy 2024-29 (which was refreshed and approved at A&P Committee on 13 January 2026) and adheres to the legislative duty to obtain best consideration for its surplus land and property assets. The new disposal policy will continue to provide transparency and demonstrate compliance with legislation and best practice and is adopted in order to support effective property disposal decision making within the council and to ensure that disposal of council owned assets are carried out in a fair and consistent manner and achieves the best possible outcomes for the council and its residents.
- 2.4 The Council adopts a Corporate Landlord model for managing property assets, transferring responsibility from individual service areas to a central corporate function. All property transactions are managed through Property Service as the Corporate Landlord. A key responsibility of the Corporate Landlord model is the disposal of property assets that are no longer required or meet the operational and strategic requirements of the Council.
- 2.5 The Delivery Plan within the current Land and Property Strategy includes an action to develop a Council Land and Property Disposal Policy.
- 2.6 Democratic services confirm that the content of the policy does not result in the requirement for any changes to the Council's constitution.

### 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The land and property disposal policy document, which is included as Appendix 1 to this report, is structured to give officers and members a detailed understanding of the process the council will follow in the disposal of surplus land and property assets. It has been confirmed by democratic services that none of the changes within the policy warrants a change to the council constitution.
- 3.2 Disposal of property assets used for mainstream educational purposes is governed by the School Standards & Framework Act 1998 and subsequent legislation. In September 2016, the Commercial & Investments Committee approved a specific disposal strategy for surplus freehold land on Academy School sites, and this remains the strategy we comply with for the disposal of Academy school land.
- 3.3 The Asset Programme Board has five workstreams, one of which is the Asset Challenge review of all our property assets, this process and assessment determine the suitability of the existing council property assets for retention (in their existing condition or after refurbishment), redevelopment or disposal and is covered in more detail within section 5.1 of the policy document.
- 3.4 In the case of the latter option of disposal, these property assets will be classed as surplus to internal council use, where some or all the following criteria are met.
- The asset no longer makes a positive contribution to the delivery of council services nor aligns with the Strategic Framework of the Council.
  - The revenue and capital demands to maintain the asset far outweigh any income, financial or policy benefits
  - It has no potential for future internal strategic regeneration and/or redevelopment purposes but may offer other external regeneration opportunities.
  - An alternative site can provide and deliver a more cost-effective and efficient service.
  - The asset does not align with current or emerging council strategies.
  - The property or land is surplus to operational requirements and if disposed of would contribute to the council's financial sustainability.
  - No potential to share use with partners (One Public Estate/Community).
  - The asset does not contribute towards the Council's commitments to a net zero carbon energy efficient estate.
  - The property is of a poor condition, has sufficiency, suitability issues and/or environmental issues which do not meet service and legislative standards, compliance and/or health and safety and has excessive running costs.

- Better public and social value can be obtained by transfer of the asset to another public or community body.
- A service area informs property of their intention to vacate the building.
- The building is underutilised, and/or large areas unused.

3.5 Section 2.0 of the policy details the scope and aims of the policy.

3.6 Section 4.0 of the policy informs the legislative and regulatory context the council must follow in disposing of assets with particular focus on the requirements within s123 Local Government Act 1972 and the requirement to achieve best consideration.

3.7 Section 5.0 covers the general policy approach and process for a disposal of a surplus asset from initially declaring it surplus through to completing the contractual disposal.

3.8 The main changes to current practices we propose for consideration and approval within this policy are detailed below:

**(a) Assets and Procurement Committee approval before marketing.**

Currently, approval for property disposals is obtained at the Assets and Procurement committee **after** the property has been marketed, and bids have been received (for those over £750,000 in value).

**Proposed Change:**

- For assets valued at over £750,000 and intended for open market sale, it is proposed that the committee grants approval for the disposal **prior to marketing**, rather than after bids are obtained. Agents and internal valuers will estimate the value.
- The Executive Director of Finance and Resources will be delegated authority to finalise disposal terms in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.
- The reason for this suggested change is that approvals can be subject to delays arising from committee dates, which can result in decisions being deferred for a few months following the receipt of bids. Such delays increase the risk of purchaser withdrawal, extend the duration of holding costs (such as council tax and business rates) and postpones the receipt of sale proceeds.
- Under this proposal officers would present a report detailing the proposed marketing strategy and details of an asset for disposal with a capital value above £750,000 to Committee for approval. The report would detail the site particulars, and method of marketing for consideration. Within the report officers will recommend whether it is felt that on receipt of bids we would return to committee for approval to complete, or if this would be delegated following due diligence and legal agreement to the Executive Director Finance and Resources in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to complete the sale. The recommendation is not removing the consideration of the committee rather it is providing under the agreement of committee members the

flexibility to complete disposals more efficiently if it is agreed that the sale is in no way contentious nor has a particular member or community interest.

**Examples where we would still refer to Committee for approval following receipt of bids:**

- Shire Hall, Cambridge.
- Former Mill Road Library, Cambridge.

**Examples of non-referral:**

- Straightforward office sale with no identified community or member interest.

**(b) Sales to This Land Ltd.**

The Council's arm's length wholly owned development company, This Land Ltd, is currently offered **all** sites before they are openly marketed, to enable them to express an interest to purchase.

**Proposed change:**

- It is proposed that This Land Ltd will only be offered potential development sites which are suitable for residential development and at a market value, and if the size of site is aligned and meets their agreed business plan. The agreed scope for sites will be agreed between This Land Ltd, the Executive Director Finance and Resources and the Shareholder Sub Committee. Any subsequent valuation will be determined by an independent RICS Registered Valuer.

**(c) Sales to public sector partners.**

**Currently:**

All assets are currently offered to the local District Council, before being marketed openly.

**Proposed change:**

- All sites will continue be offered at market value to the local District Council, with valuations determined by an RICS Registered Valuer, in line with the valuation matrix. The only change to this will be the adoption of guidance and legislative changes which will be introduced within the progress of Local Government Reorganisation, this will be effective within this policy once implemented.

**(d) De minimis sales threshold**

Requests are received for purchases of small areas of land, for example to extend a garden. In these cases, the legal and surveyor's costs can exceed the value of the sale.

**Proposed change:**

Establish a de minimis threshold of £5,000 for the land/property asset value, and that these potential disposals are not to be prioritised, however if any do proceed the Council's legal

and surveyor costs will be paid by the purchaser.

3.9 This report includes the following Appendices.

3.9.1 Appendix 1: The Land and Property Disposal Policy document.

3.9.2 Appendix 2: A Threshold Disposal Matrix document which details the various different types of disposal we may deal with, the purpose of disposal, the term, process required to determine value, the value thresholds which then will be applied to the constitution delegations and confirmation who has the authority to approve at that value level.

3.9.3 Appendix 3: Community Asset Transfer (CAT) guidance process, the council currently has a guidance document dated 2009 which covers this process. This proposed new process builds on the existing guidance and provides transparency and consistency for both officers and community groups to follow. The process confirms the required conditions for a council asset to be considered for a transfer, as well as stating where an asset would not meet the criteria for consideration. It also includes the required governance stages involved in the process.

3.9.4 Appendix 4: Includes two flow charts, the first showing the process in determining a council asset to be declared surplus from further internal use, and the second flowchart covers the process from being declared surplus to obtaining approval to market the asset.

3.9.5 Appendix 5: An EQIA has been completed and approved by the team.

## 4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 None, the approved Land and Property Strategy have an action within its delivery plan to provide a new Land and Property Disposal Strategy.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The Land and Property Disposal Policy alongside prudent asset challenge and service asset management will provide the framework to enable the council to only retain assets that support service delivery and corporate ambitions within the council's Strategic Framework.

5.2 The policy will support existing budget planning through generating asset disposals as well as delivering revenue savings and reduce the requirement for capital borrowing. The financial returns in the form of capital receipts delivered from this policy will support the council in its delivery of essential services for the residents of Cambridgeshire.

5.3 The policy will provide clarity, consistency and transparent governance in all land and property disposals, ensuring all legislation and regulatory guidance is adhered to.

5.4 The policy will adopt the specific requirements set out within the Local Government Reorganisation for the disposal of assets once implemented.

## 6. Significant Implications

### 6.1 Finance Implications

The policy itself does not directly have financial implications, however the reviewed policy enables a more efficient process which will directly impact positively on the ability to deliver capital receipts and revenue savings aligned to the budget planning of the council.

### 6.2 Legal Implications

This policy will ensure all Council constitution, legislative and professional statutory requirements for disposals within a local authority environment are adhered to.

Any specific requirement and guidance on property disposal during Local Government Reorganisation will become effective and adhered to once implemented.

### 6.3 Risk Implications

We currently operate within existing guidance, the statutory and regulatory processes and follow the Council's constitution, however this policy will make this process more explicit and consistent for all stakeholders to refer to and follow. If the policy is not adhered to and we do not meet the legislative requirements the council has for best consideration there is a risk of challenge.

### 6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

A completed Equality, Impact Assessment (EqIA) form was submitted Ref number 06693 and approved by the team.

### 6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications

The policy impacts this area, as due to the policy enabling asset management and rationalisation of the portfolio, the reduction of assets will have a positive impact on the carbon footprint of our asset portfolio by reducing the number of operational assets through their disposal.

## 7. Source Documents

Appendix 1: Land and Property Disposal Policy document.

Appendix 2: Disposal Thresholds Matrix.

Appendix 3: Community Asset Transfer guidance process

Appendix 4: Flow Chart to determine (a) asset surplus, and (b) process to enable marketing.

Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment form.