

Cabinet

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Thursday, 27 July 2023
Present	Councillors Mike Blakemore, Polly Blakemore, Gary Fuller, Rich Holgate, Tim Prater (Vice-Chair), Stephen Scoffham, Rebecca Shoob and Jeremy Speakman
Apologies for Absence	None.
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Susan Priest (Chief Executive) and Jemma West (Democratic Services Senior Specialist)

NOTE: All decisions are subject to call-in arrangements. The deadline for call-in is Monday 7 August at 5pm. Decisions not called in may be implemented on Tuesday 8 August 2023.

19. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

20. **Local authority Housing Fund Phase 2**

The Government has provisionally offered the Council £584k of Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) grant, to facilitate the purchase of 4 properties to temporarily accommodate Afghan settlement programme refugees in the district and a further property which can be used to accommodate other homeless households. The Council is required to submit a non-binding memorandum of understanding to the Government by early August to confirm if it wishes to take part in the programme.

Proposed by Councillor Shoob,
Seconded by Councillor Scoffham; and

RESOLVED:

- 1. That report C/23/23 be received and noted.**
- 2. That the Council should participate in the LAHF Phase 2 initiative and purchase 5 properties in line with the scheme requirements.**

3. **That the match funding requirements of the scheme be noted and that this is proposed to be met from Council resources.**
4. **That a further report is tabled at Full Council to add the scheme to the Council's Medium Term Capital Programme.**

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations because: -

- a) The LAHF covers 40% of the purchase cost for five properties, plus a further £20K per property for other associated costs.
- b) Four properties will be used initially to house Afghan refugees, but can subsequently be used to accommodate households on the Housing list.
- c) The scheme will also provide funding for one property that can be used to accommodate other homeless households.

21. **Biggins Wood - Update on progress with remediation contract and site disposals**

The report provided an update to Members regarding the current position of the Biggins Wood site. Following the last Cabinet report in November 2021 (C/21/51) the report updates on the progress of the remediation contract and the sale of the commercial and housing land as previously agreed. The purchaser of the residential land has withdrawn their offer for the site. The commercial developer has made an offer for the whole site (i.e. both elements of commercial and residential land) and a further offer has been received by the council from a different organisation for the residential element of the site only.

The Cabinet Member for Assets and Operations drew attention to an addendum which had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. The addendum set out amended financial information regarding one of the offers.

Proposed by Councillor Speakman,
Seconded by Councillor M Blakemore; and

RESOLVED:

1. That report C/23/24 be received and noted.
2. To note that [REDACTED] has withdrawn their offer for the residential land.
3. To note that the contract with [REDACTED] for the remediation of the site has concluded.
4. To agree that a Deed of Variation is executed with [REDACTED] to remove the construction of the access road and associated drainage connections from the contract and avoid any potential claims or further charges.
5. To agree that the unconditional offer from [REDACTED] for the whole site represents best value and poses the least risk to the Council, providing

- delegated authority to the Director, Housing & Operations to finalise the legal work to conclude the disposal.
6. To provide delegated authority to the Director, Housing & Operations to conclude any further matters relating to the development and disposal within the agreed budget envelope.

(Voting figures: 9 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The developer for the residential land has withdrawn their offer. The council has received: (a) an offer from the commercial developer for the whole site; and (b) a further offer from a housing association for the residential land only. These offers and the risk associated with them need to be considered by Members so that officers can proceed with the site disposal and satisfy the conditions of the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF).