

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

29th July 2014

## PLAY BARN SCHEME – COVERED MARKET AREA

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Amanda de Warr, Head of Customer Access and Financial Support
Wards Affected	Central
Ward Councillors Consulted	Yes
Key Decision	

### 1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report outlines a proposal for a play barn scheme in the redundant covered market area in Redditch town centre, and asks members to consider committing to the lease of the land for this purpose at no cost.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- 1) **in principle the land known as the covered market area outlined in the site map at Appendix 1, be leased, for a peppercorn rent, to the Redditch Town Centre Partnership for the purpose of the scheme to create a play barn, subject to the planning and funding requirements of the scheme being secured, within 6 months of agreement;**
- 2) **the Executive Director for Finance and Resources and Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, be delegated authority to be satisfied that the necessary planning permission and funding for the scheme have been secured by the Redditch Town Centre Partnership and to prepare and execute a Lease of the land to the Redditch Town Centre Partnership for a term and on conditions, which will secure the Council's interests whilst supporting the venture in so far as it is compatible with them; and**
- 3) **the Redditch Town Centre Partnership be asked to provide regular updates to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder on progress.**

### 3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 As part of the celebrations to mark the town's 50th anniversary since it was designated a new town, the Town Centre Partnership have been considering a suitable legacy project.

**EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE**

29th July 2014

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- 3.2 Redditch Borough Council has been approached with a proposal for a play barn scheme in the now redundant covered market area.
- 3.3 This space occupies a central location and is a link between the Kingfisher Centre and the Town Hall. It is ideally suited to a scheme of this type as the area is mainly covered, has access to nearby facilities, is self-contained and secured at night, and is already covered by CCTV as well as the Kingfisher Centre's security patrols.
- 3.4 The scheme proposes a multi-function area which includes separate dedicated zones for younger children and older children, and an adult's exercise zone.
- 3.5 The scheme caters for children with disabilities and aims to provide a stimulating, fun and safe area for families to bring their children, free of charge to play.
- 3.6 It is hoped that the scheme would regenerate the area and provide an incentive for suitable businesses to take up the kiosk units in that area. These units are not included in the scope of this proposal and therefore any increased income would benefit Redditch Borough Council. If the scheme were to go ahead we would look to link the use of these units to the play area to ensure they take account of the needs of those using the space and did not contradict the overall aims of the Play Barn.
- 3.7 The proposal is in line with the Council's Strategic Purpose to 'Provide good things for me to do, see and visit'.

**Financial Implications**

- 3.8 The proposal is for this to be a community project, to be initially funded and maintained through grants, sponsorship and local contributions from individuals and organisations within the community.
- 3.9 The only financial contribution from the Borough Council would be the lease of the land at a peppercorn rent and some officer time through the Town Centre Partnership arrangements.
- 3.10 If sufficient funding cannot be generated within six months then the project will not go ahead.
- 3.11 The land would remain the property of Redditch Borough Council and the lease reviewed in accordance with normal practice after a specified period.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

29th July 2014

- 3.12 This land has little value to the Council. The land is excluded from the sale of Threadneedle House. Property Services have confirmed that any use of this land would be beneficial for the area, and that this proposal is not detrimental to the sale of Threadneedle House.
- 3.13 Whilst providing a free adult exercise area this would not be in competition with the Council's own leisure centre.

### **Legal Implications**

- 3.14 The scheme is subject to planning approval. Under s 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council is required to achieve best value for its disposals. However, the social contribution to the wellbeing of the community can be regarded as justifying the disposal at no cost to a community provider, under the Local Government Act 1972 General Disposal Consent (England) Order 2003.
- 3.15 The term and provisions of the Lease will need to be evaluated depending on the outcome of the funding arrangements and the grant of Planning permission upon which the proposal is based to protect the Council's interests.
- 3.16 The lease will require that the land be return to its original (or better) condition at the end of the lease period, i.e. stripped of all equipment. It would further be required that the Town Centre Partnership take on full liability for the area and activity within it.

### **Service/Operational Implications**

- 3.17 The Planning Service have advised that in principle, the use of the site as a play area is acceptable in planning terms, but that steps should be taken to avoid prejudicing any future development strategies for the town centre.
- 3.18 If agreed the lease would be for no more than 10 years and would include specified review dates to allow for the fact that another use may, in the future, be more appropriate for the site.

### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.18 The scheme is designed to provide a safe, fun, vibrant family facility for all. It is intended that there will be suitable facilities for children of all abilities.

**EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE**

29th July 2014

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**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 The risk to the Council is low. There has been no other viable use of the space come forward, and there is no loss of income as result of leasing the land for this scheme.
- 4.2 There is no cost to the Council.
- 4.3 Liability for the area and equipment would be held by the Town Centre Partnership.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Site map

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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