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**Blue Light Hub – Middle House Lane**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Matthew Dormer, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
Wards Affected	Abbey Ward
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

For the last four years officers have been working with colleagues at Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority (H&WFA) and West Mercia Police on a project to replace both the existing fire station and police station serving Redditch, which are no longer fit for purpose. This report explains the impact on the land owned by the Council and recommends a position to enable the next stage of the development to move forward.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 Council is asked to RESOLVE that:-**

- 1) the Council owned land located at Middle House Lane be declared surplus;**
- 2) the proposed land swap to facilitate the redevelopment of the joint blue light hub, involving the exchange of Council owned land located at Middle House Lane (Plot 1) with land located at Middle House Lane owned by Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority (plot 4) be approved;**
- 3) a remediation strategy for the plots should be developed; and**
- 4) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services, following consultation with the Leader, to finalise the heads of terms and to proceed to completion.**

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Background**

- 3.1 Redditch Fire Station was identified for replacement in 2010. The police station serving Redditch, located centrally in Redditch, has also now reached the end of its serviceable life and needs replacement or major refurbishment.
- 3.2 The aspiration is to build a new joint fire and police station utilising two areas of land adjacent to the current existing fire station location, owned by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC). It is hoped that the existing police station site will be developed as part of the Towns Fund as the Council has applied to utilise £1m of funding from the initial allocation to facilitate this. As detailed in the Towns Investment Prospectus (TIP) the anticipated usage is for a much Digital Manufacturing and Innovation Centre.
- 3.3 The Blue Light Hub project is supported through the One Public Estate (OPE) initiative, with the aim of maximising value for the publicly owned estate through collaboration and partnership working. The current fire station site is owned by Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority (H&WFA) and using the other sites in Redditch Borough and Worcestershire County Council ownership provides a potentially good solution by maintaining the location from which fire service operational response is delivered, thereby reducing any negative impact on H&WFA fire cover response for the area.
- 3.4 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to facilitate a project to deliver a new fire and police station at this location and there have been several factors that have been considered during this process. These include:
- a) The amount of land required to facilitate a new fire station site and the amount of land remaining to deliver housing in line with the requirements of the local development plan and other planning requirements.
  - b) The potential to facilitate a joint Police and Fire service facility (a 'blue light hub') at the location, which will provide the advantages of other blue light hubs and enable replacement of the current existing Police station and freeing that site for potential redevelopment.
  - c) Potential location of any facility (fire station, or combined police and fire station), to calculate the land required from each of the freehold owners, to inform any agreement to acquire the required land as

part of a potential “land swap” arrangement. Separate valuations have been undertaken by H&WFA and the Borough Council.

- d) The risk of ground contamination across the three sites and subsequent impact on the financial viability of the project.
- e) Costs for the desired facility.

3.5 An options appraisal commissioned by H&WFA has identified a preferred option of the location of the facility on the combined H&WFA/WCC/RBC sites. The operational requirements for a joint police and fire station (blue light hub) have been established and from this assessment an estimate of the site requirements has been mapped out. This has been used to determine a site layout (“block plan”) applied to the combined site. The results of this exercise indicate that this preferred option will allow for circa 8 dwellings on the remainder of the combined site, which will align with the local development plans for Redditch. This provides for a good blue light hub layout providing adequate parking and training facilities. This is the optimum use of the combined site and is represented in Appendix 2.

3.6 For the “preferred option” discussed above, the land uptake requirement breakdown is set out below with the total land uptake for the combined blue light hub comprising 0.82ha/ 2.03acres.

- a) Proportion of HWFRS land uptake on the combined hub: 29% of HWFRS total land ownership.
- b) Proportion of the WCC land uptake on the combined hub: 100% of WCC total land ownership.
- c) Proportion of RBC land update on the combined hub: 58% of RBC total land ownership.
- d) Total residual land for housing development: 1.36acres.

### **Financial Implications**

3.7 The successful development of a Blue Light Hub under these proposals is subject to the construction costs and tender price for the joint Fire/Police station being within budget.

3.8 Separate valuations have been commissioned to ensure independence. One needs to take into account the wider benefit to the Borough of having the blue light joint hub close to the town centre and the subsequent redevelopment of the current police station. In addition, the current site is an area where development is needed, and it is unlikely that this would be forthcoming without the joint hub project.

3.9 Further information about the valuations for each section of land owned by H&WFA, Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council is provided in Appendix 5.

3.10 Redditch Borough Council will ultimately own Plot 4 and Plot 5.

**Legal Implications**

3.11 Following extensive discussion between officers initial Heads of Terms are in the process of being finalised, subject to Member decision to enable the land swap between the Fire and the Borough Council to be delivered and in readiness for the next steps of the development to be actioned.

3.12 The current land ownership is as follows:  
a) The H&WFA land comprises 0.867 acres. (Plot 3 and 4)  
b) The RBC land consists of 1.781 acres (Plot 1 and 5)  
c) The WCC land comprise of 0.746 acres. (Plot 2)

3.13 A map, setting out current land ownership, can be viewed at Appendix 1 for identification purposes only.

3.14 Should the land swap be agreed then Plot 4 will be transferred to Redditch Borough Council with the current fire station demolished. This will take place once the new joint hub is completed on Plot 1 which will be transferred by RBC to HWFA prior to the completion of the Transfer of Plot 4 from HWFA to RBC. Plot 4 will be protected by entering into an Estates Contract and registering RBCs interest at the Land Registry A comprehensive residential redevelopment can then be explored by the Council and Worcestershire County Council. Remediation of the Plots will be the responsibility of the Purchaser post completion.

**Service / Operational Implications**

3.15 The development of a Blue Light Hub successfully under these proposals would be subject to the granting of planning permission for the joint Fire/Police station.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

3.16 There are no specific equality or diversity implications.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 It has been accepted by H&WFA that the risk associated with the demolition of the current fire station will sit with the Fire Authority. This mitigates any risk to the Council and will enable a clear remediated site to be passed for residential development once the new hub is built.

**5. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Appendix 1 – Current Land Ownership Map
- Appendix 2 – Blue Light Hub Option – Map
- Appendix 3 – Overlay of Land Ownership on Development Proposal
- Appendix 4 – Map showing Plots 4 and 5
- Appendix 5 – Land Valuations

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

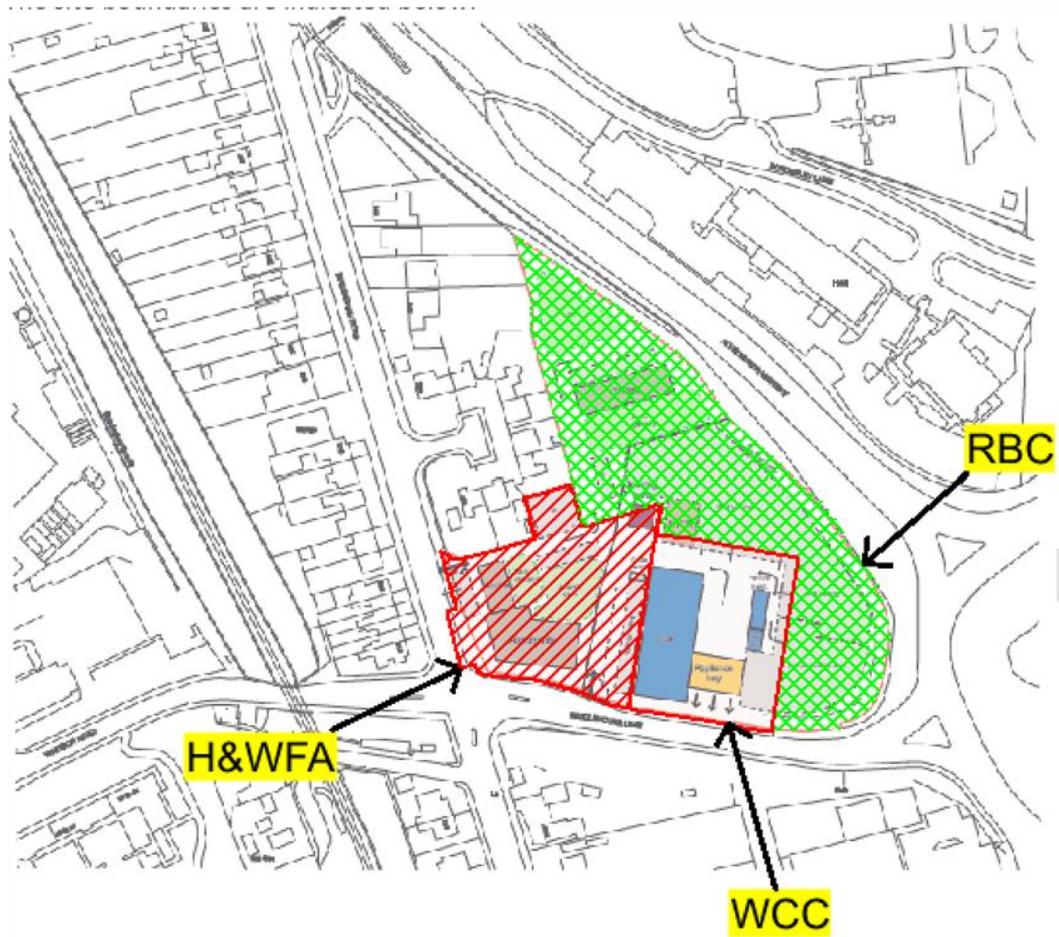
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**Council**  
2021

25<sup>th</sup> January

**APPENDIX 1: Current Land Ownership Map**

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**APPENDIX 3: Overlay of Land Ownership on Development Proposal**

