

Resolution of Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste

On Monday 11 August 2014 I made a decision in respect of the Corsham Mansion House and Library. Pursuant to our constitution (paragraph 3(c), protocol 5) that decision must be published within 2 days and shall not take effect for five days.

Since I made this decision I have become aware that the report that was tabled before me failed to contain a relevant consideration and therefore the decision as it stands may be flawed. As the decision is still at the stage whereby it has not taken effect I therefore resolve: -

To revoke my decision made on 11 August 2014 and to refer to Cabinet for consideration the report with the additional detail contained in the reasons for this decision.

Reasons

The report that was tabled was based on a decision of the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee made on 14 September 2011 namely to offer the Mansion House and Library (the property) for sale on the open market. At that time a significant factor that influenced that decision was achieving capital receipts.

There has been, in the last two months, considerable movement in respect of growth funding within the Wiltshire/Swindon area whereby funding and amounts have now been confirmed to the LEP by central government.

There is the potential for some of these funds to be available for economic development within the Corsham area and therefore circumstances have changed in respect of the Council Estates and capital realisation, namely before any decision is made regarding property disposal consideration needs to occur as to whether such properties can assist in future economic development.

Unfortunately the report tabled before me was based purely on the 2011 decision to offer the property for sale and therefore the report only identified three options for consideration: to accept one of two bids or to not accept either bid and refer the matter back for further resale.

The report did not address the question which has recently as to the benefit of the property being retained and utilised by Wiltshire Council as part of any economic development within the Corsham area. This is a fundamental consideration before any final decision is made on disposal.

It was only as a result of the publishing of my decision that I was alerted to the potential for the option to be considered. I consider that the underlying decision to offer the

building for sale needs to be re-considered before any decision on the bidding process should be determined.

As the original decision to offer the property for sale was by the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee then it is appropriate that that consideration of this fundamental issue should be by full cabinet where all relevant considerations can be explored.

If my decision were to be called in for scrutiny and I was asked about this point then I would have to answer that it would be my view that scrutiny should refer the decision back to myself for reconsideration (paragraph 36, Part 8 of our constitution) and in light of what I now know my reconsideration would be to revoke my original decision and refer the report and this detail up to cabinet (paragraph 1 Part 3C of our constitution) in light of the additional fundamental question that needs to be considered namely whether the underlying decision to offer the buildings for sale should still stand.

Therefore rather than incurring unnecessary costs in proceeding through the scrutiny process I consider the appropriate course for me to take is to revoke my decision of 11 August 2014 and to refer the underlying report plus these comments up to Cabinet for consideration as to whether the decision of 14 September 2011 to offer the buildings for sale should stand.

Cllr Toby Sturgis

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development management, Strategic Housing, Property, and Waste