

## REPORT TO CABINET

|   |   |  |                                    |                                     |                                     |
|---|---|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Open  |   | Would any decisions proposed:  |                                    |                                     |                                     |
| Any especially affected Wards   | Heacham                                 | Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide  |                                    | YES                                 |                                     |
|   |   | Need to be recommendations to Council  |                                    | NO                                  |                                     |
|   |   | Is it a Key Decision   |                                    | YES                                 |                                     |
| Lead Member: Cllr Simon Ring (Portfolio Holder Corporate Projects and Assets)<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:simon.ring@west-norfolk.gov.uk">simon.ring@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a> |   | Other Cabinet Members consulted:<br>Cllr Alistair Beales, Leader   |                                    |                                     |                                     |
|   |   | Other Members consulted:<br>Cllr Terry Parish Ward Member and Parish Council<br>Cllr Andrew Jamieson Ward Member |                                    |                                     |                                     |
| Lead Officer: Jason Birch – Assistant Director Property and Projects (Interim)<br><a href="mailto:Jason.birch@west-norfolk.gov.uk">Jason.birch@west-norfolk.gov.uk</a>      |   | Other Officers consulted:  |                                    |                                     |                                     |
| Financial Implications<br>YES   | Policy/<br>Personnel Implications<br>NO | Statutory Implications<br>YES  | Equality Impact Assessment<br>YES/ | Risk Management Implications<br>YES | Environmental Considerations<br>YES |

Date of meeting: 23 September 2025

### NORTH BEACH HEACHAM: PROPOSED SALE OF LAND

#### Summary

The Borough Council is the freehold owner of a parcel of land which includes land occupied by 105 beach hut plots. Each plot is let to tenants by way of a 10-year lease which is due to expire on 31 March 2026.

This report sets out a proposal to sell the land through a public auction before the end of 2025 in order to give the tenants an opportunity to agree lease terms with a new landlord.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The disposal of this land asset delineated on the Site Plan attached to this report and known as land at North Beach Heacham is progressed through a suitable public auction for sale to the highest bidder.
2. The Assistant Director is authorised to set a reserve for the site in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business.
3. The Assistant Director of Property and Projects is authorised to approve non-material changes to the Disposal Terms.

#### Reason for Decision

The proposal set out within this report will facilitate the disposal of the asset to deliver a Capital Receipt and to avoid a cost and reputational risk to the Council.

## **1 Background**

The property services team are currently reviewing the property portfolio to ensure that properties retained in it are appropriate for the council to own and manage. In doing this it is considering many factors including the councils' objectives, whether it is providing value for money to residents and its duties as a public body to manage its assets responsibly.

The site at North Beach Heacham extends to about 470m x 20m of sand dune behind the sea wall with a total site area of about 1.0 hectares (2.7 acres). On the site there are 105 concrete pads on which beach huts have been placed by the tenants. The site is located within the Environment Agency's Indicative Tidal Floor risk area of the North Sea.

Planning permission was granted on 7 August 2020 for the continued use for the standing of 105 Beach Huts until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2031. The permission prohibits use as permanent residential accommodation, overnight accommodation or use at any time other than from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September in any calendar year.

The huts are let by way of individual leases for a term of 10 years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 with rent increases linked to the RPI. For the year 2024/25 the huts produced a gross income of £61,118.78. However, unrecovered costs include officer time managing the site, issuing rent demands and pursuing rent arrears [REDACTED] as well as water rates and legionella testing and treatment obligations for standpipes on the site.

63% of the tenants live within the Borough while 37% are from outside.

## **2 Options Considered**

If we were to retain the site, there will be a need to resource the negotiation of 105 lease renewals together with legal costs for new leases before the leases expire in March 2026 the combined cost of this exercise is likely to be in excess of the net income for the financial year. There is also a risk that the rents will decrease due to the continuation of the Brown Flag designation of Heacham Beach.


In May 2025 a number of the beach hut tenants were quoted in local and national press and television criticising the council for both the level of rents and also its poor maintenance of the site grounds.

To retain the site will expose the council to further high-profile criticism and provide a poor and underperforming financial return when property management resources are under pressure.

### **3 Policy Implications**

None

### **4 Financial Implications**

The sale of the site will produce a capital receipt in excess of 

### **5 Personnel Implications**

The approach wet out within this report requires limited staff resource apart from the usual input from the Property Services Team and by Legal Services.

### **6 Environmental Considerations**

The site is already identified as being within a tidal floor risk area. There will be no change to its current use.

### **7 Statutory Considerations**

Under Section 123: Local Government Act 1972 local authorities are required to gain “best consideration” from disposal of property assets. The proposal is to sell the property through a widely advertised and marketed public auction thorough a specialist auction agent. An auction will provide hard evidence that best consideration has been achieved.

### **8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

(Pre screening report template attached)

### **9 Risk Management Implications**

The sale of the site is likely to be commented on in the press through the tenants. To mitigate risk of adverse publicity we have engaged with Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors and the tenants.

### **10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted**

None known

## **11 Background Papers**

Site Plan

## Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

|  |  |          |          |         |        |
|--|--|----------|----------|---------|--------|
| Name of policy/service/function  | Sale of Land for continued use.  |          |          |         |        |
| Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>  | New  |          | Existing | X       |        |
| Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.<br><br>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.   | This is a land sale where the current use of the site is likely to continue. |          |          |         |        |
| Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>   |  |          |          |         |        |
| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Answer</b>  |          |          |         |        |
| <p><b>1.</b> Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><b><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></b></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit <a href="#">The King's Fund</a></i></p> |  | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Unsure |
|  | Age  |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Disability   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Sex  |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Gender Re-assignment   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Marriage/civil partnership   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Pregnancy & maternity  |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Race   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Religion or belief   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Sexual orientation   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Armed forces community   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Care leavers   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Health inequalities*   |          |          | X       |        |
|  | Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)                               |          |          | X       |        |
| <p><b>Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:</b></p> <p>The land is currently let to 105 individual tenants which may belong to various groups. However, the use of the land is expected to continue with the same tenants able to negotiate new lease terms with a private landlord.</p>  |  |          |          |         |        |

| Question   | Answer   | Comments                                      |
|--|----------|---|
| 2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another? | No       |   |
| 3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?   | No       |   |
| 4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?<br>If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section                                  | N/A      | <b>Actions:</b>                               |
|  |          | <b>Actions agreed by EWG member:</b><br>..... |
| <p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p><b>Decision agreed by EWG member:</b> .....</p>  |          |   |
| 5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?   | Yes / No | <b>Please provide brief summary:</b>          |
| <b>Assessment completed by:</b><br>Name  |          |   |
| <b>Job title</b>   |          |   |
| <b>Date completed</b>  |          |   |
| <b>Reviewed by EWG member</b>  |          | <b>Date</b>                                   |

☐ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy ([corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk))