

INFORMATION NOTE: CHURCHGATE AND ITS SURROUNDING AREA

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members on latest position regarding Churchgate and its surrounding area

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1 Full Council on 27th November will receive a report on Churchgate and its Surrounding Area. This will be on the legal advice sought in response to resolution (i) of the Report to Full Council on 24th July 2014 on the Council's ability to enter into an exclusivity agreement with a developer.

RESOLVED: *That, having considered the proposals by the various interested parties, and the risks to delivering the Council's aspirations for the Churchgate area, it be agreed to:*

- (i) Commit budget of £10,000 at this stage to enable procurement advice to be sought on the Council's ability to enter an exclusivity agreement;*
- (ii) Continue to await the publication of the draft Local Plan, whilst at the same time considering the approach to take (as per recommendation (v) below) based on the options considered in the 18th July 2013 Full Council report;*
- (iii) Not to enter into any form of exclusive discussions with any interested party until full unchallenged planning permission is gained and a solution for the market and car parking is obtained as part of such planning permission;*
- (iv) Consider the option of a 150 year lease agreement as part of any development agreement on a scheme which has gained full planning permission;*
- (v) Continue an open dialogue with all interested developers on the Churchgate site in the interim. Any discussion over the design of proposals are to be with the local planning authority only as part of normal pre-application discussion; and*
- (vi) Commit budget for expert advice and support in progressing a development agreement only once a developer has obtained full planning permission and procurement advice has confirmed exclusivity is possible.*

REASON FOR DECISION: *To allow the Council to progress its aspirations for the Churchgate area of Hitchin to protect the medium to longer term vitality and viability of the town, in the light of updated planning policy considerations and prudent use of Council funds.*

A copy of that report to Council on 27 November 2014 is attached as Appendix A (with its own Appendix) to this Information Note.

- 2.2 The resolution from the Full Council Meeting on 27 November 2014 will be made available to Hitchin Committee on 2nd December 2014.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 That the Hitchin Committee note the content of this Information Note

4. CONTACT OFFICERS

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