



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday 16 March 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>ACQUISITION OF FORMER CO-OP BUILDING - 100 NEW CHESTER ROAD, NEW FERRY</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report seeks approval for the purchase of the former Co-op building (“The Property”) in New Ferry as a strategic acquisition to support the delivery of the master plan for the area. The regeneration of the town centre is a priority for the Council following the explosion in March 2017.

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 has been developed and the focus covers the following five themes:

- Safe & Pleasant Communities
- Brighter Futures
- Active and Healthy Lives
- Sustainable Environment
- Inclusive Economy

This proposal, and the wider regeneration New Ferry Regeneration programme, delivers against all of the above themes. Most specifically, it will contribute significantly towards the ambitions for a thriving and inclusive economy, creating jobs and opportunities for all.

The associated Report of the Director of Regeneration and Place and the full Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee of 26 January 2022 are appended to this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to consider the request from the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee to approve that the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to acquire the Co-op building in New Ferry at a price of £700,000.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Co-op building (“the Property”) is situated at the heart of New Ferry district centre and therefore forms a key site in respect of enabling any future redevelopment of the area to take place. The Property fronts New Chester Road close to the junction with Bebington Road. The property also has a frontage on to Bebington Road with the Woodhead Street carpark to the rear. This purchase is recommended as this Property is key to enabling the comprehensive regeneration of New Ferry which is a strategic priority for the Council.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 Other options have been considered and are included within the minutes of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee and the appended report.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Background information is set out within the appended report.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 In February 2018 Cabinet agreed a budget for the Capital Programme and Financing for 2018 - 2021. Within the programme there was £30 million allocated to deliver the Strategic Acquisition Programme. This Strategic Acquisition Programme supports the achievement of the key economic goals as set out in the Wirral Growth Plan This acquisition of the Property aligns with the Strategic Acquisition Programme criteria.
- 4.2 Costs related to items such as acquisition, demolition, insurances, security, loss of business rate income, Stamp Duty Land Tax have been included in the Full Business Case and it is proposed that these costs are met from the Strategic Acquisitions Programme. The proposed purchase price is £700,000, Stamp Duty Land Tax is estimated at £24,500, the rates payable are projected at £90,000 per year but subject to deductions in 21/22 dependent upon vacant rates liabilities and demolition of the building (demolition costs are estimated to be £125,700). It is proposed that the property would be demolished as soon after purchase as possible and is estimated to take four months. The property is currently occupied by the Phabulous Community Charity Trading Hub (Phab) to defray business rates and security costs, with a modest, unstaffed unit retained by the Co-op Funeral Services to provide appropriate advertising space for its services. As vacant possession will be provided upon completion of the acquisition, the vacant rates liability will pass to the Council. However, the proposal is to demolish the building as soon as possible after the acquisition.
- 4.3 The redevelopment of this site for mixed/residential use would provide the Council with future Council tax income from any new residential units that are built. The sale of the site to a developer could also generate a capital receipt for the Council.

4.4 In accordance with the Council's Constitution any acquisition of land or property of a value in excess of £100,000 is reserved to Policy and Resources Committee.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 In accordance with Part 3B of Constitution (Committee Terms of Reference), the Policy and Resources Committee has two main areas of responsibility, which is to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, including making decisions on policies and co-ordinating spend not reserved to full Council, and to maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets.

5.2 The Policy and Resources Committee is charged by full Council to provide a co-ordinating role across all other service committees and retain a 'whole-council' view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management. In particular, this includes specific responsibility for any acquisition of land or property of a value in excess of £100,000 is reserved to Policy and Resources Committee.

5.3 As part of the matter of business that was the subject of the report to Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee falls under that responsibility reserved to the Policy and Resources Committee, the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee's resolution is presented as a recommendation.

5.4 As the decision in this matter is the subject of a recommendation from another Committee, the Policy and Resources Committee must take into account the resolution of that Committee and give due regard to the guidance and comments made by its members. The Policy and Resources Committee must not, however, consider itself bound by that Committee's recommendations or otherwise fetter its discretion; its Members must come to their own decision. In doing so, the Committee must satisfy itself that it has been provided with all relevant information or a suitable précis to enable it to comply with its duties and make a lawful decision.

5.5 Other legal considerations are as set out in the appended report(s).

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 This report is for information only and does not contain any direct resource implications.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 The relevant risks are covered in the original report submitted to the Committee.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 Engagement and Consultation were covered in the original report submitted to the Committee.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact

Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

- 9.2. Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery may need to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The recommendations contained within this report will remove a vacant building and replace it with a mix of retail and residential units which will be designed and built to modern standards with a focus on carbon reduction and energy efficiency in line with the Council's policies.
- 10.2 The regeneration proposals for New Ferry are being taken forward in line with the Council's priorities on the environment and climate change. The report on the preferred developer, coming later in the year, will set these out in detail.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The acquisition and development of this property will enable the replacement of a property of low visual and commercial merit to be replaced with a new, wider development improving the area, creating new homes and jobs.

### **REPORT AUTHOR:**

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### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Minute Extract  
Appendix 2 Full Report

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Valuation advice from Lambert Smith Hampton  
Negotiated head of terms

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Marketing advice from the agent and auctioneer.

Independent valuation appraisal

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee	22 November 2021
Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee	26 January 2022

