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To: The Chair and Members  
of the Cabinet

County Hall  
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Date: 1 February 2024

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### **CABINET**

Friday, 9th February, 2024

A meeting of the Cabinet is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am in the Committee Suite (DAW) - County Hall to consider the following matters.

Donna Manson  
Chief Executive

### **A G E N D A**

11 Question(s) from Members of the Public (Pages 1 - 6)





## QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC Friday 9 February 2024

**1. QUESTION FROM DR EMMA KIVUVA (ATTENDANCE TBC)  
Re: Sale of Part of County Hall Grounds**

What purpose is the land being sold for; is it being sold with planning permission and if so for what? How much money would it be sold for as it is unlikely to raise significant funds for council work, while being severely detrimental to the local community?

Does the Council have plans to sell off further parts of the site and if so which parts?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

**2. QUESTION FROM HARRIET DUFFIN (ATTENDANCE TBC)  
Re: Intended Sale of Public Open Space at Site of the Matford Offices**

I would like to make some points regarding:

- Elements not fully addressed in the report on this subject accompanying the agenda
- To point out the strength of feeling of local residents
- To ask the council to consider a delay in selling in order instead to take time to review the site as a whole.

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

**3. QUESTION FROM SUE STOTT (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)  
Re: Sale of Matford Lane Office Site**

Was there any discussion as to whether the land could be put to other use than put up for immediate sale, such as putting it out for community use/ outdoor activities/ community hub?

I am aware of the need for monies to be put into the coffers but the immediate sale of the land without proper discussion with the local community does not seem to be a democratic process.

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## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

### **4. QUESTION FROM MELISSA RUDDOCK (ATTENDANCE TBC) Re: Matford Offices site disposal request**

If the disposal order is approved, will the Council commit to working with local community groups to explore fundraising and a preferential sales process in order for the land to be purchased for community benefit?

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

### **5. QUESTION FROM WILL DUFFIN (IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Matford Offices**

The Council has invited objections to the disposal of land at County Hall, but has it properly considered the alternative options to the disposal of this land? The surrounding open green space is a considerable community asset, and would it be prudent to undertake a proper review and public consultation of this site, alongside the future of the county hall grounds as a whole?

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

### **6. QUESTION FROM ANNE BATE (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Redevelopment of Matford Offices site**

I moved to Leighdene Close when widowed 8 years ago. A large part of my choosing to live there was accessibility To the green space of county hall especially as I get older. I have walked around county hall every day since Covid to do my 10,000 steps and so enjoy the peaceful ambience, and bumping into fellow residents to pass the time of day. I think this has become such an important place in our community especially as our lives changed so much with Covid.

I would suggest a review of the whole site rather than just selling off bits every time there is shortfall in the DCC budget.

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

**7. QUESTION FROM LIZ HAARER (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**  
**Re: Possible development of Building and Land surrounding County Hall**

I am writing to express my deep concern about any possible development of the buildings, and in particular the land, surrounding County Hall.

I live just off Matford Avenue, and I enjoy walking my dog on this land every day, as do many other dog owners.

It would be massively detrimental to the city if we lost any of this green space - an oasis in the middle of a rapidly overdeveloped city.

Please could you consider a planned review of the site, in consultation with local residents.

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

**8. QUESTION FROM SI JOHNS, YMCA EXETER (ATTENDANCE VIA TEAMS)**  
**Re: Homelessness Funding**

Following the questions asked at the last Adult Scrutiny meeting, it is still unclear as to if this budget is discontinuing the contribution to Homelessness contract in the coming financial year. We know that the 1st Quarter has been funded but can you confirm? Is the funding for this contract included in the budget for Quarters 2, 3 and 4 of the financial year 2024 – 2025?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

The DCC contribution to homelessness support in 2024-25 had been planned to be £739K, a reduction from the 2023-24 budget. This is set out in the budget book presented to Cabinet 9 February.

Additional funding announced in the Secretary of State's Written Statement on 24 January 2024, after draft budgets had been prepared and Scrutiny reports issued, provides the Cabinet the opportunity to further manage risks and provide additional funding to invest in service delivery and improvement, this includes retaining the budget for the Authority's contributions to districts for homelessness services, providing further time for engagement with districts on the longer-term arrangements. This will be taking place through Team Devon.

**9. QUESTION FROM MRS JULIE ROTHWELL (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**  
**Re: Proposed sale of council land**

I am writing to you because I am disabled, a wheelchair user. As a local resident, weather permitting, I enjoy going down to the council grounds to enjoy some fresh air in a green space. If this is taken away, I have no choice but to get in my motability car & drive further afield. It's obvious with all the road closures around

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here that Exeter is anti-car use. But what choice do I have but to drive elsewhere when the perfect facility is taken away. Not everyone can walk or cycle so for a wheelchair user, the best place is at present on my doorstep. No car needed. I know that as a disabled person I am in a minority but there is a disability act that is almost always ignored! I see this sale of land possibly to a property developer as another way of preventing freedom of movement for disabled people.

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

### **10. QUESTION FROM ANTHONY QUINN (ATTENDANCE VIA TEAMS) Re: County Hall Land Sale**

The County Hall land sale you wish to approve today will dispose of an 'asset of community value'. When development occurs there, it will have an outsized impact on the County Hall site, changing its character and impacting on the enjoyment of the County Hall site for the Exeter Community. Has Devon County Council considered their legal obligations regarding disposal of an 'asset of community value'?

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

### **11. QUESTION FROM ELKE QUINN (NOT IN ATTENDANCE) Re: Sale of DCC land**

I understand that the Cabinet is meeting on Friday, 9th February to decide on the sale of DCC land, previously the site of Matford Offices.

The land is situated in our community and is part of the green space of County Hall, used by the community for recreational purposes. A development of this area would dramatically impact on the feel, fabric, flora and fauna of the green space enjoyed by many current and future residents.

Have members of Council or Cabinet already entered in formal or informal discussions with potential developers, regarding a sale, value of the land or extend of development?

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

### **12. QUESTION FROM GARETH SORSBY (ATTENDANCE VIA TEAMS)**

## **Re: Homelessness service**

In August Cllr John Hart paused the homelessness cessation of contracts and stated “we need to better understand the full impact of such a decision on all aspects of public services” and that “by the end of the calendar year, I want to have a joint view on the way forward and a design for how the service will work in the future” we are now clearly past the end of 2023 yet we still have no published impact assessment nor a document describing how the service will work in the future, when can other councillors, the districts and partner organisations expect to see these?

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

The DCC contribution to homelessness support in 2024-25 had been planned to be £739K, a reduction from the 2023-24 budget. This is set out in the budget book presented to Cabinet 9 February.

Additional funding announced in the Secretary of State's Written Statement on 24 January 2024, after draft budgets had been prepared and Scrutiny reports issued, provides the Cabinet the opportunity to further manage risks and provide additional funding to invest in service delivery and improvement, this includes retaining the budget for the Authority's contributions to districts for homelessness services, providing further time for engagement with districts on the longer-term arrangements. This will be taking place through Team Devon.

## **13. QUESTION FROM DAVID SULLIVAN (ATTENDANCE TBC) Re: Proposed disposal of the County Hall Estate**

The Report by the Director of Transformation and Business Services asserts that the proposal is to secure funds from the disposal of land and therefore to ‘support sustainable economic recovery’. Unfortunately (although inevitably) the Report does not identify the specific element of the economic recovery programme which would be funded from this capital receipt and which – in the absence of that receipt – would have to be foregone. This is a curious omission from the Report. Will the Cabinet identify how this capital receipt would be deployed before authorising the certain loss of a specific community amenity in the hope of securing an uncertain benefit which at this point has not been – and perhaps cannot yet be – identified?

## **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

The Cabinet will be deferring any decision on this matter to a later date, pending further consideration.

