

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/068/2006-07.
Date of meeting: 9 October 2006.



Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services.

Subject: Roding Youth Centre – 50 Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill.

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Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations:

That Essex County Council Property Services be advised:

(a) the District Council supports Buckhurst Hill Parish Council's application to purchase the premises for ongoing use as a community hall; and

(b) the District Council has no operational requirement for these premises and declines the opportunity to purchase in the event that Buckhurst Hill Parish Council do not proceed to complete the transaction.

Report:

1. The County Council has been attempting for many months to bring to a conclusion the sale of the Roding Youth Centre to Buckhurst Hill Parish Council (BHPC). An ultimatum has now been issued to the Parish Council to complete the purchase otherwise the offer to sell to them on the agreed terms is withdrawn and the property will be offered for sale at an auction on 31 October 2006.
2. The premises include a main hall; lounge/coffee bar/kitchen; hall store; male and female changing rooms; rifle range and first floor offices, comprising a net floor area of about 4,700 square feet/438 square metres. The site accommodates 12 car parking spaces.
3. To cover the possibility that the sale to BHPC may not proceed, the County Council are, in parallel to the ultimatum to BHPC, re-offering this property to the District Council. The property is offered freehold subject to the currently undocumented occupancy of Roding Rifle and Pistol Club of the rifle range. It is understood that the Rifle Club are willing to enter into a 15 year lease prior to the sale on provisionally agreed terms. In addition, the County Council suggests that the ongoing hirers of the hall be allowed to continue. The main users of the hall are a pre-school group, short mat bowls club, martial arts club and the rifle club.
4. An indicative sale price of £300,000 has been quoted. The sale will be subject to the original covenants providing that the premises shall be used only as a territorial drill hall, place of worship, dance hall or similar uses. The grantor later agreed a relaxation to permit use as an Educational Youth Centre. Generally the covenants have not interfered with the current community uses.
5. The premises are situated within a mainly residential area as shown on the attached plan and suitable for alternative development subject to the necessary approvals.

Any proposals to redevelop the site will require a release of the covenants on terms to be agreed with the grantor.

6. Heads of Services have been made aware of the availability of these premises and invited to confirm any operational requirement for a community hall in the Buckhurst Hill area. That consultation exercise has not produced any firm interest in using the premises.
7. Given the County Council's timetable for completion of the sale and the proposal to enter the property at an auction on 31 October 2006, this report is brought to the Cabinet's attention as a late item for consideration.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

8. The District Council has no operational requirement for these premises and therefore declines the opportunity to purchase

Other Options for Action:

9. In the event that BHPC do not proceed, the District Council registers an interest in purchasing the premises, on terms to be agreed.

Consultations Undertaken

10. The County Council offered the property for sale to the District and Parish Councils in accordance with the surplus land and property sales protocol.
11. The Leader of the Council and one Ward Member have expressed a preference for the Parish Council to own and manage the property for ongoing community uses.

Resource Implications:

Budget Provision: Purchase price in the region of £300,000. Repair, maintenance and management costs to be determined and possible refurbishment to modern standards.

Personnel: Valuation and Estate Management service.

Land: Roding Youth Centre, 50 Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill.

Community Plan/BVPP Reference: TBA.

Relevant Statutory Powers: Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 – best consideration for land and property assets.

Background Papers: Property file EV/1137.

Environmental/Human Rights/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None.

Key Decision Reference (if required): N/A.