

DISPOSAL OF OLD SHIP LANE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND CAR PARK

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 A report was submitted to Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2002, in which proposals were made in relation to the closure of Old Ship Lane public convenience, following the refurbishment of the public convenience in Back Lane in 2001.
- 1.2 A motion was agreed that disposal of the Old Ship Lane toilets could provide a financial receipt to support the refurbishment programme.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The report to Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2002 (min.489/02) provided a detailed summary of the condition of all the public conveniences that had not previously been refurbished. The report contained proposals for the potential refurbishment of the remaining five public conveniences and closure of Old Ship Lane public convenience.
- 2.2 A further report was submitted to Community Services Overview & Scrutiny on 10 December 2002 (min.606/02) following consultation with Town and Parish Councils, about the potential for them to financially support the public convenience within their own area.
- 2.3 In response to the consultation, Rochford Parish Council made no comment in relation to the closure of Old Ship Lane public convenience.
- 2.4 Responses from the Town and Parish Councils was mixed in that some were prepared to contribute and others were not. The responses were reported on at Community O&S Committee on 10 December 2002.
- 2.5 There has been little public response when the Old Ship Lane public convenience has been closed for periods of time following vandalism.

3 DISPOSAL OF THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND CAR PARK

- 3.1 In the earlier report of 10 December 2002, it was stated that an initial valuation had been received. This indicated that disposal of the public

convenience site only would provide very little financial benefit, as the area of the site provided very little potential.

- 3.2 It was therefore considered that the site of the public convenience and the adjacent eight space public car park would provide a viable redevelopment site for residential / commercial use, which would have a reasonable value.
- 3.3 The alternative option to disposal is to consider demolition of the toilets and include the area into the car park, providing potentially two additional parking spaces.
- 3.4 An alternative option for the car park could be to either sell to the Public House or to the Doctors Surgery, for additional car parking space, although this would provide little return to the District Council.
- 3.5 An initial valuation has been made of the total site. This is contained in P&C Appendix A (circulated separately). This is a guide price only and would be dependent on market conditions at the time of disposal and the potential of the site for redevelopment.

4 PARKING ISSUES

- 4.1 The car park contains eight parking bays, one of which is a disabled bay. The car park is well used but is not a pay and display car park and so generates little revenue, except as fines for exceeding the one hour allowed for parking.
- 4.2 Management of this car park requires patrol officers to regularly visit, note the location of the vehicles in the car park and check whether they are still in the same position after more than one hour. In financial terms, this is not a cost effective use of the patrol officer's time.
- 4.3 Back Lane Car Park has 182 spaces and has sufficient capacity to absorb any small increase in vehicles on all days, except on a Tuesday morning, when the market is in the Square. The closure of Old Ship Lane Car Park could therefore theoretically boost revenue in Back Lane from car parking charges.
- 4.4 If the car park were lost, an additional disabled bay would need to be located either on the public highway, in a suitable location, or in Back Lane Car Park to replace the lost disabled bay in Old Ship Lane.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Old Ship Lane public convenience has frequently been vandalised in recent years, including attempts to set fire to them in 2002 and 2003. There have been 69 repair orders issued for Old Ship Lane public toilets in 2001 and 2002. The public convenience is currently closed and boarded up to secure the site.
- 5.2 Closure of this public convenience and disposal of the site should reduce the opportunity for vandalism and other anti social behaviour at this location. Old Ship Lane is to the rear of a Public House and has no other buildings fronting the Lane. A potential development of either residential or commercial use would present the opportunity to improve the outlook onto this Lane and provide improved passive surveillance of the area.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This small site within the Rochford Town Centre would provide an opportunity for a development, which would have a significant impact on the environment in Old Ship Lane, which currently lacks any buildings fronting on to this section of the Lane.
- 6.2 The site is currently designated for a public convenience and car parking but there appears to be the opportunity to re-zone this site for residential or commercial use.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Funding requirements have already been agreed for the refurbishment of the five public convenience and an increased budget has also been agreed for an improved cleaning regime.
- 7.2 Disposal of this site, including the car park for potential residential or commercial use, would provide sufficient resources to fund a significant majority of the capital costs of the refurbishment programme.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Provision of public conveniences is not a statutory obligation. However, there is alternative provision in Back Lane, which was fully refurbished in 2001.

9 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Rochford Parish Council did not comment in correspondence dated 21 November 2002 on the disposal of this site following consultation about its future. It can be anticipated there may be public objection as a result of this report.

10 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That Members agree to the disposal of Old Ship Lane Public Convenience and Car Park through local agents at market value and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate. (CD(F&ES))

- 10.2 That should Members agree to the disposal of Old Ship Lane Convenience and Car Park, then Members give first resolution approval for submission of an outline planning application for the site to obtain the maximum value. (CD(F&ES))

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Background Papers:

None.

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