

Report title	Leasing of Former Compton Youth Centre	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman City Assets and Housing	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	Tettenhall Wightwick	
Accountable Director	Mark Taylor, Deputy Chief Executive	
Originating service	Assets	
Accountable employee	Luke Dove Tel Email	Strategic Asset Manager, Assets 01902 557121 Luke.Dove@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	City Assets Leadership Team Asset Management Board	18 November 2020 7 December 2020

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Approve the letting of the former Compton Youth Centre to Windmill Community Church on a 99-year peppercorn lease, subject to terms.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive to approve the terms of the lease.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed letting of the former Compton Youth Centre to Windmill Community Church on a 99-year peppercorn lease and seek the Panel's endorsement of the same.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The former Compton Youth Centre is located on Henwood Road, within the Tettenhall Wightwick ward as edged red and detailed in appendix 1.
- 2.2 It is mainly a brick-built structure with car parking provision to the rear of the property and amenity land to the front aspect.
- 2.3 It was previously occupied by another community organisation who also operate from two other council assets within the City. Through mutual agreement this tenancy agreement was terminated and the property vacated in September 2019.
- 2.4 The property has been maintained as a void asset since this date and is in a significant state of disrepair, with expected refurbishment costs to bring it back to a compliant and occupiable standard being estimated in excess of £200,000.
- 2.5 Following discussions with Ward Councillors, it was expressed that due to the limited number of community-based assets in the locality, this property was retained as such moving forward.
- 2.6 The Council were subsequently approached by Windmill Community Church (WCC) who expressed an interest in the property.

3.0 Windmill Community Church

- 3.1 WCC are a locally based registered charity that currently operate from St Thomas Church, Finchfield. Having taken on this property in a derelict condition they have completely transformed it into a vibrant community hub and place of worship having raised £235,000 from its members and grant trusts for its refurbishment. This has now been successfully operating for the last two years.
- 3.2 They are part of the Citywide Social Prescribing network co-ordinated by Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and have recently put forward an application for the 'Queen's Award for Voluntary Service'.
- 3.3 WCC expressed that they would wish to acquire the former Compton Youth Centre on a long lease and invest in the same to provide a similar offering to that at St Thomas Church, Finchfield.
- 3.4 Following further discussions with WCC, the Council agreed that a community consultation was to take place in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team to ascertain local residents' thoughts on the proposal, which was very successful and received positive feedback.

- 3.6 Following completion of the consultation, a business case was then requested from WCC which outlined their proposal for the site moving forward and provided details of their financial health and opportunities for securing funding for completion of this project and the ongoing associated running costs. This demonstrated a robust financial position with access to extensive reserves along with the necessary knowledge to attract and secure grant funding as required.
- 3.7 They currently have over 50 active volunteers who ensure the organisation operates effectively, supported by staff from the Missionary Society.

4.0 Proposed Development

- 4.1 Subject to Council approval, WCC intend to substantially upgrade the former Compton Youth Centre building both internally and externally along with on-site parking. They have engaged professional consultants' and submitted a planning application for D1 use with Tree and Traffic Consultants reports having been undertaken. The renovation plans far exceed just bringing the building back into a compliant condition and anticipate the upgrade will be completed in three phases over a two-year period.
- 4.2 Similar to the WCC facility at Finchfield, the former Compton Youth Centre is to be used by local residents and will include a community coffee hub, craft group, community choir, fitness group, youth groups parenting courses, life groups and Sunday worship.
- 4.3 WCC's vision for Compton has now been developed further following the community consultation to Compton residents who have suggested additional activities to the above such as flower arranging, junior football linked to Wolves FC, history group, rambles' and nature group together with support as a local place of Worship.
- 4.4 Many residents simply also require a place in Compton to attend due to being lonely as no other facility currently exists. This development would provide an excellent opportunity to support the wellbeing of the City's residents.
- 4.5 The Council have historically experienced difficulty in acquiring suitable premises for elections in this locality and having discussed this with WCC, is also something that they would be happy to include as part of the lease to allow for this provision.
- 4.6 Overall the aim of WCC is to renovate an existing community-based asset to a completely modernised standard, which will then serve and involve the community in relevant ways for the common good ensuring an inclusive approach and all are welcome.
- 4.7 To offset the funding requirements for the capital investment required, WCC requested a 99-year lease at peppercorn rent. This will be on full repair and insuring basis.

5.0 Options appraisal

- 5.1 An alternative option is to not undertake the leasing of the asset and continue to hold the property as a void asset until an alternative suitable use is identified. This will increase the likeliness of continued vandalism and anti-social behaviour and the Council will continue to incur holding costs.

- 5.2 The asset could also be sold on the open market in return for a capital receipt, but this would be at the detriment of losing a vital community asset within this part of the city.
- 5.3 The Council could alternatively demolish the existing building and utilise as amenity land, again to the detriment of losing a valuable community asset.

6.0 Reasons for decision

- 6.1 The proposed letting provides a viable, robust and sustainable solution to ensure that the asset is efficiently utilised and will provide complete refurbishment and modernisation of a valuable community asset ensuring that community needs are met both now and in the future.
- 6.2 In consideration of complying with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, the social and economic benefits to be derived from leasing the former Compton Youth Centre to WCC are significant within the local community that it serves. These benefits include improved access to community facilities on an all-inclusive basis with an 'open door' policy, benefits to physical and mental health from activities to be held at the centre, regeneration of a visible public asset, community prosperity, reduction in current holding costs for the Council and an opportunity to utilise the asset in future for polling station provision creating asset efficiency and further reducing costs for the Council.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 The proposed letting of the former Compton Youth Centre to Windmill Community Church is on a 99-year peppercorn lease.
- 7.2 As a result of the lease, investment costs in excess of £200,000 will be funded by the lessee that would otherwise be required from the Council in order to bring the Youth Centre into a compliant state for use.
[TT/13112020/W]

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 The Council is under a duty to obtain best consideration under s123 Local Government Act 1972. However, the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 gives consent to the disposal of any interest in land at less than best consideration where the council considers it will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic social or environmental well-being of its area. For the reasons set out in paragraph 6.2 and elsewhere in this report, it is believed that there will be a range of such benefits to the local community.
- 8.2 Once terms have been agreed, legal advice and representation will be available throughout the conveyancing process.
[DC/12112020/E]

9.0 Equalities implications

- 9.1 All development plans will consider and meet the needs of all people within the local community and an all-inclusive approach will be taken by WCC.

10.0 All other Implications

- 10.1 The leasing of the former Compton Youth Centre will provide a suitable solution for utilising a void asset currently managed by Corporate Landlord and will reduce the risk of vandalism or antisocial behaviour at the premises.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 There are no background papers for this report.

12.0 Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Former Compton Youth Centre location plan