

REPORT FROM: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**TO: SPECIAL BUDGET POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE**

DATE: 11th FEBRUARY, 2021

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**ACQUISITION OF FORMER PUBLIC CONVENIENCES,
MARKET STREET, NELSON**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to acquire the above mentioned property.

RECOMMENDATION

This Committee is asked to approve the Council's acquisition of the above mentioned property by way of private treaty.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

To secure ownership and control of this long term vandalised and empty property.

ISSUE

Background

1. Following a Scrutiny Review in 2010, the Council decided to close a number of public toilet blocks around the Borough, including the subject toilet block on Market Street, Nelson. The building was subsequently sold in October 2015 by way of tender. Planning permission was sought by the new owner and consent was granted for its demolition and construction of three apartments in August 2016. This development has not taken place. The site was sold on at Auction for £29,000 in August 2017.

Current position

2. At its meeting held 4th January, 2021, Members of Nelson Committee recommended that Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to repurchase and refurbish the former public toilets on Market Street, Nelson using the Nelson Town Deal funding and that the

management and maintenance of the facility be transferred to the Nelson Town Council. This was to provide a new public toilet provision within the Town centre.

3. The toilet block is in poor condition and Members were advised in the report that the cost of refurbishment would be in the region of £50,000 with an estimated annual running cost of £10,000.
4. Since the report was considered the Council have agreed to acquire the adjacent building, Trafalgar House, which is in extremely poor condition and may require demolition. If Trafalgar House has to be demolished and the toilets are to be brought back into use, the Council will have to erect a new external wall to the exposed elevations of the toilet block at an additional estimated cost of £20,000 as the property lies within a Conservation Area and the elevations would have to match the existing elevations in dressed stone. Work will also be required to the roof of the toilet block as part of the works.
5. Members may therefore wish to consider whether it is economical to acquire and refurbish the toilet block and bring it back into public service or whether to acquire it for demolition and construct a new replacement facility in the future which may be achieved at a lower cost.
6. Terms have been agreed with the current owner of the toilet block for the Council to reacquire it at an agreed price of £30,500 plus payment of the vendor's reasonable legal fees.
7. Acquiring the toilet block would provide the Council with control of the building and provide an opportunity to retain and refurbish as per Nelson Committee's recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee or to demolish and or replace the toilet block. Either way the Council have regained control of this building which is an eyesore and impacts negatively on the Market Street properties.
8. The Council, in advance of submitting a Town Investment Plan the Council has recently received £750k Accelerated Funding from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to immediately fund capital projects that are in line with the Towns Fund intervention framework, to support jobs and economic recovery resulting from the expanded service to be provided within. This funding can be used to acquire this building and similar properties requiring intervention by the Council to prevent further decline and allow for future redevelopment. The Towns Fund Accelerated Funding has to be spent by March 2021.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None directly arising from this report

Financial: The cost of acquiring the property has been agreed at £30,500 (excluding SDLT or VAT if applicable) with Accelerated Funding

Legal: The Council has agreed to bear the vendor's reasonable legal costs.

Risk Management: None that are considered applicable.

Health and Safety: The building is in poor condition and its refurbishment or demolition would address the hazards to members of the public.

Sustainability: None that are considered applicable.

Community Safety: As per the Health and Safety issues mentioned above.

Equality and Diversity: None that are considered applicable.

APPENDICES Location plan.