

St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council

Report #11.4

Corston Land Acquisition

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To invite the council to consider how best to secure the future use of the land at the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields and the redundant land behind 22 Rodbourne Road.

2. Background

- 2.1. Some years ago Wiltshire Council (WC) introduced a policy of transferring assets to those parish and town councils that wished to acquire these unwanted facilities. The council registered its interest in acquiring the land at both the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields and the redundant land behind 22 Rodbourne Road.
- 2.2. Due to the overwhelming interest from town and parish councils, only the most significant and valuable assets were afforded priority in the first phase of transfers. However, as a temporary arrangement and to maintain interest in the acquisition of redundant assets, WC introduced a process whereby the operational and maintenance issues of a particular asset could be transferred via a 7-year lease.
- 2.3. In January 2018, the council acquired 7-year leases on the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields. At the time WC wished to investigate the residential development opportunities of the land behind 22 Rodbourne Road and therefore did not wish to include this small plot of land in the lease process. After several years, WC concluded that no residential opportunities existed.
- 2.4. Periodically over the last seven years the council has enquired whether WC had an estimate of when a formal asset transfer for these three pieces of land might be achieved. With the termination of the two 7-year leases on 13th January 2025, the need for a mutually agreeable solution was urgently required. WC were approached again and has recently responded to this last enquiry with an offer of either
 - 2.4.1 To continue with the 7-year lease arrangement for the two playing fields and the land behind 22 Rodbourne Road, Corston
 - 2.4.2 To offer the three areas in Corston (the land behind 22 Rodbourne Road, the playing fields at Rodbourne Road and Chippenham Road) to St Paul Without Parish Council on a Community Asset Transfer (CAT), meaning the council take the freehold of the parcels of land with no charge.

3. Options

- 3.1. To decline the offer of renewed 7-year leases on the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields
- 3.2. To select the most appropriate of the offers outlined in 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. There will be no initial cost to the council for either the 7-lease or CAT option outlined in 2.4, however there will be unquantifiable ongoing financial commitments with both options.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1. The council is invited to discuss the matter and agree the most appropriate way forward.