

REPORT TO ASSETS AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

FREEHOLDERS HUT



Report Reference A-22-12
Meeting Date 13th February
Agenda Item 8
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Town Council has leased the Freeholders Hut (Northwich Road, near Hooked on the Heath) from the Friends of the Heath (formerly Nether Knutsford Freeholders) since at least 2001. The small building (11 sqm) is used for storage of materials and various items used by the Town Ranger and for events.

The previous lease ended on 30th January 2023. The Town Clerk had been in discussion with Friends of the Heath to agree a new 10-year lease. Friends of the Heath have been reviewing options and agreed that ownership is no longer beneficial to the group and, recognising how useful it is to the Town Council, have offered to transfer the property to the Town Council.

Friends of the Heath is not requiring payment, but requests the council covers any legal costs involved in registering change of ownership of the property with the Land Registry. The title of the property is currently registered therefore the transfer would be a simple property transaction. Friends of the Heath suggest one solicitor could be appointed to act. The estimated cost for this would be approx. £500.

2.0 ASSETS POLICY

The council's assets policy states that the council should only acquire assets which are both within Knutsford and "add to or preserve services and public realm it provides to residents and visitors". The building is a small operational building used for storage. It is essential for the provision of services as the council has little storage elsewhere. It therefore meets the test of 2.1.

The building will require occasional maintenance. As an operational building, it will not generate income, however this is offset by the fact that it saves the council cost in obtaining storage space elsewhere and enables the council to hold stocks of supplies which reduces operational costs. It therefore contributes positively to the overall financial position of the council.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee recommends to Full Council that it approve acquisition of the freehold of the Freeholders Hut.