

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property

**PORTFOLIO:** Deputy Leader

**SUBJECT:** Moor Lane Bus Depot

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on negotiations regarding the Moor Lane Bus Depot and to seek approval to negotiate a long-term lease with company Y

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **It is recommended that:  
Members authorise officers to progress a long-term lease with company Y.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In March 2022, the Executive Board considered two proposals that had been received from local businesses.

The Executive Board authorised officers to progress more detailed discussions with Company Y, which would culminate in Company Y being granted a lease for the building.

Company Y is based just outside the borough and relocated following a fire. The company is keen to return to the borough for operational reasons and most of its employees are Widnes residents.

In their original proposal, Company Y offered a 'baseline' figure per calendar month but caveated the offer by stating that this would be subject to further surveys and dependent upon repairs and Health and Safety requirements.

The advantage of this offer is that it could utilise the building for the purposes for which it was intended and, therefore, was unlikely to impact on the Listed Building and planning requirements.

The main disadvantage identified was the uncertainty surrounding the level of repairs the company would take on.

Since March, further discussions have taken place with the company and it has emerged that the company directors would be eager to secure a long-term lease (minimum thirty years) with the Council. This would enable the company to secure funds to undertake improvements and invest in the building, as well as give the company certainty that the building could be retained over a longer period of time, thereby avoiding any disruption from the requirement to relocate.

Granting a long-term lease to the company would obviously prevent the Council from exploring alternative uses and options as outlined in the report to Executive Board in March. However, as reported at the last meeting, the building would require significant investment to bring it back into use. The listed status of the building would also have a bearing on any future uses.

Given the budget constraints that the Council is facing, it is unlikely that alternative options could be brought to fruition in the short-term. Unfortunately, this would leave the Council with an empty building to manage and maintain.

Consequently, the Executive Board is requested to authorise officers to continue negotiations with company to secure a long-term lease, and a rent to reflect this.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no further policy implications at this stage.

#### 5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no further financial implications

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.0 **Children & Young People in Halton**

N/A

##### 6.1 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

N/A

##### 6.2 **A Healthy Halton**

N/A

6.3 **A Safer Halton**

N/A

6.4 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The bus depot is in a prominent site and will be opposite the new leisure centre on Moor Lane. The listed status of the building will have an impact on the type of regeneration and development that can be progressed in this part of Widnes.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 An options appraisal and associated risks was presented to the Executive Board in March 2022. However, there is a risk that company Y may choose not to proceed with the lease.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
None under the meaning of the Act		