

Committee: **Lead Member for Resources**  
Date: **17 October 2017**  
Title of Report: **Former Pells School playing fields, Lewes**  
By: **Chief Operating Officer**  
Purpose of Report: **Following the approved closure of the school by the County Council to seek Lead Member approval to now formally declare the site surplus to operational requirements in order to enable its disposal.**

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## **Recommendation:**

**The Lead Member for Resources is recommended to:-**

- 1) Declare the County Council's interest in the former Pells School site as surplus to County Council operational requirements; and**
  - 2) delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to negotiate and agree terms for the disposal of this property, to enable the Council to obtain best value in line with s. 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.**
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## **1. Background**

1.1 On 11 October 2016 Cabinet approved closure of Pells Church of England Primary School, to take effect from 31 August 2017.

1.2 The County Council ownership extends only to the playing fields of the school, with the remainder of the site and all buildings owned by the Diocese of Chichester, who wish to sell their interest. The County Council's freehold interest is approximately 0.36 ha (0.9 acres) out of a total site of 0.845ha (2.1 acres).

1.3 The whole site was fully vacated by the end of July 2017, with some site activity in August to remove a portacabin in compliance with a historic planning obligation. The County Council controlled the buildings until 31 August 2017 when they were handed back officially to the Diocese. Security of the site is being arranged to minimize risks.

1.4 The intent is for the whole site to be marketed jointly with the Diocese, given the nature of the site interests and to ensure best value.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The Council has consulted with its partners through SPACES to ascertain any short or long term usage for the buildings or site. There has been no requirement for the whole or a significant part of the site identified. It is not feasible, and could impact on values, for any smaller element of the site to be excluded from the wider site disposal at this stage.

2.2 The disposal of the site will be subject to the consent of the Secretary of State for Education in accordance with Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010. Both the Diocese and County Council are required to pursue appropriate consultation as part of the application and this is being progressed.

2.3 The County Council's interest in the site is shown on the attached plan (Appendix 1).

2.4 We have undertaken all standard internal consultations which have confirmed there is no operational requirement for the County Council's land.

2.5 The Local Member has been notified of our recommendation. A request for excluding a very small pocket park on the site from any disposal has been considered, but this area would be anticipated to form part of wider provision, improvement and funding of facilities provided by any future development of the wider site.

### **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations**

3.1 Pells School has closed, and the playing fields are surplus to the requirements of the County Council.

3.2 Early consultation with the South Down National Park, Lewes District Council planners and the evolving Neighbourhood Plan process has identified some support for development, but that needs to be fully tested through the formal planning process as the site is not allocated for non-school use, and we are aware of adjacencies to landfill. The site nevertheless could come forward for development and thus generate a capital receipt to the County Council. In order to ensure the potential of the site is maximized it is proposed that marketing of the site be pursued jointly with the Diocese team. The title of the site has been checked to confirm that there is no obligation to offer the site back to an original vendor or make a payment in lieu.

3.3 It is recommended that this property be declared surplus to County Council operational requirements and that authority be delegated to the Chief Operating Officer to negotiate and agree terms for this property, to enable the County Council to obtain best value in line with s.123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

**KEVIN FOSTER**  
**Chief Operating Officer**

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor O'Keeffe

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS



	
<b>Map Title:</b> Pells CEPS	
<b>Date:</b> 22 May 2017	<b>Map No:</b> 1
<b>Scale:</b> 1:1,250	<b>Author:</b> GG/RP