

**Report to:** Lead Member for Resources

**Date of meeting:** 23 March 2018

**By:** Chief Operating Officer

**Title:** Petition to save the small separately fenced area at the far end of the Pells School site, Lewes.

**Purpose:** To consider the petition to save the small separately fenced area at the far end of the Pells School site on Landport, Lewes near to Stansfield Road, for continued use as a Forest School.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The Lead Member is recommended to advise the petitioners that:

- (1) the petition is acknowledged;**
  - (2) the Chief Operating Officer is authorised to continue with the marketing of the site; and**
  - (3) that any consideration of the local need for Forest School related activities be considered as part of future planning and development in the local area.**
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## **1 Background**

1.1 At the County Council meeting on 6 February 2018 Councillor O’Keeffe presented a petition to the Chairman asking:

*“Calling on the Council to save the small separately fenced area at the far end of the Pells School site on Landport, Lewes near to Stansfield Road, for continued use as a Forest School this area to be given into the care and ownership of the Landport Community Hub charity, or other suitable arrangements made by agreement with the lead petitioners to achieve the same end, that this tiny percentage of the site be kept for local children to have Forest School opportunities.”*

1.2 A copy of the petition is available in the Members’ Room. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and a spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Resources.

## **2 Supporting information**

2.1 On 11 October 2016 Cabinet approved closure of Pells Church of England Primary School, to take effect from 31 August 2017, with the intent for the whole site to be marketed jointly with the Diocese of Chichester, given the nature of the site interests and to ensure best value.

2.2 At Lead Member for Resources on 17 October 2017 it was recommended that the property be declared surplus to requirements and that the 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. The report to Lead Member for Resources on 17 October 2017 acknowledged that a request for excluding a very small pocket park on the site from any disposal had been considered, but that this area would be anticipated to

form part of a wider provision, improvement and funding of facilities provided by any future development of the wider site.

- 2.3 The whole site is currently being marketed by Clifford Dann with the sales project being led by the Diocese of Chichester on this occasion as the majority owners of the site. It is anticipated that the site will be marketed for a further 6-8 weeks before considering bids.
- 2.4 The petition to exclude the small area currently referred to as a 'forest school' area is acknowledged.

### **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1 The former Pells School site is currently being marketed by the Diocese of Chichester on behalf of the Diocese and the County Council.
- 3.2 Any development proposals that might arise on the site will be required to provide for open space provision, and the potential to include and protect the small parcel of fenced land to support any education offer should be taken into account at the point of considering potential development of the whole site.
- 3.3 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to advise the petitioners that the Chief Operating Officer will continue with the marketing of the site, and that any future use of part of the site as a forest school can be addressed through the planning process, once a successful bidder has been identified.

#### **KEVIN FOSTER**

##### **Chief Operating Officer**

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Lead Member Report 17 October 2017 Former Pells School Playing Fields, Lewes and plan of area.