

Report to: Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

Date of meeting: 5 December 2025

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Phoenix Centre, Lewes – grant of a new lease

Purpose: Following a marketing period, this report together with an exempt report later in the agenda, sets out offers made and the analysis so that a decision can be made regarding the organisation that is to take a lease on the property in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Review written offers submitted following the marketing of Phoenix Centre, Lewes and agree to grant a lease to the highest scoring organisation as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 to the exempt report;
- 2) Approve that lease terms are agreed with the recommended organisation, in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- 3) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to agree the terms of the lease in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972, including proceeding with the next best offer(s) in the event of the transaction(s) not completing within the expected timelines; and
- 4) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to take all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

1 Background

1.1 Following a public consultation from 3 October 2024 to 28 November 2024, Cabinet approved the closure of the Phoenix Centre Day Service for older people with physical and mental health needs at its meeting on [25 February 2025](#). The service has since ceased operating from the Phoenix Centre (The Property) and East Sussex County Council (the Council) has supported the adults with accessing alternative services in the community.

1.2 On [12 August 2025](#), the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change declared The Property to be surplus to the Council's requirements and agreed that it was to be let in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

1.3 The Property is identified in Appendix 1. It comprises a single storey building that was constructed in the 1980s. It has a central courtyard and a parking area. The Property is well located in Lewes, with access from Phoenix Causeway / Malling Street. It is adjacent to Phoenix Causeway Car Park, which is owned by Lewes District Council.

1.4 The Property is now listed as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act. This requires the Council to notify the Listing Authority prior to a sale of the Property or granting a lease for longer than 25 years.

2 Supporting information

2.1 Following the decision made by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change on 12 August 2025, a local commercial agent, Crickmay Chartered Surveyors (The Agent) was appointed to market the property.

2.2 Marketing of the Property commenced on 4 September 2025, with details initially circulated to a targeted list of local and regional contacts before being more widely promoted across property platforms such as Zoopla and EACH. Following the public launch, the opportunity was shared with a wider mailing list of 120 recipients, resulting in 88 click-throughs to the property details. The campaign generated strong early engagement, both online and through direct enquiries. A range of different occupiers and potential uses were represented among those who viewed, with 11 separate parties attending block viewings.

2.3 The parties that had expressed an interest in taking a lease were contacted by the Agent with a copy of an offer form. To ensure a fair and transparent process, the offer form set out the information and details required from all parties wishing to make an offer for lease. The information required included an outline of the rent offer and details of how the proposed use could provide for older or disabled people living in the local area. A copy of the offer form is included as Appendix 2.

2.4 Interested parties were asked to make an offer via the Agent by 5pm on 3 October 2025. Seven organisations made a formal offer. These organisations covered a wide range of sectors including local charities, healthcare and wellbeing organisations.

2.5 The offers were reviewed and scored by a panel of Council Officers, formed of property officers and an officer from the Adult Social Care and Health department on 16 October 2025.

2.6 The offers, assessment criteria and order of preference are detailed in an exempt report later in the agenda.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The letting of the property will reduce revenue liabilities relating to the management and holding costs of this surplus asset. Entering into a lease with the recommended organisation will also provide the Council with an income stream and enable the property to be used by a service that enhances the wellbeing of the local area.

3.2 The Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change is therefore recommended to approve that lease terms are agreed with the recommended organisation, in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972. To ensure that this is done as efficiently as possible, it is recommended that the Lead Member delegates authority to the Chief Operating Officer to agree the terms of the lease in accordance with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972, including proceeding with the next best offer(s) in the event of the transaction(s) not completing within the expected timelines; and that the Chief Operating Officer takes all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

ROS PARKER
Chief Operating Officer

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LOCAL MEMBER

Councillor Johnny Denis

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None