

## **Property Sub-Committee - Wednesday 04 October 2023**

### **Proposed Grant of new lease on Stone Youth Centre, Station Road, Stone ST15 8ER**

Property PID 2976

**Local Member: Cllr Jill Hood – Stone Urban**

---

**Recommendation(s) by Councillor Mark Deaville – Cabinet Member  
for Commercial Matters.**

- a. That a new 15 year lease be granted at the property known as Stone Youth Centre, Station Road, Stone to Rising Brook Baptist Church on similar terms to the lease granted in 2018 for use by the tenant for charitable and community purposes only.
- b. Any amendments to the proposed new lease to be delegated to the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets to approve.

---

### **Transaction Summary**

To agree and grant a new lease.

#### **1. Current Arrangements**

The property is currently occupied by Rising Brook Baptist Church on a five-year lease from 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at a nominal £1 per annum rent – full repair and insurance basis.

#### **2. Proposals**

The tenant will be Rising Brook Baptist Church, as is the case with the former lease. The use of the property will be restricted to community and charitable uses for the local community.

#### **3. Undervalue Transaction**

The rent will be One Pound per annum if demanded and will therefore be at an undervalue as the lease replaces a previous one at the same rent. The tenant is continuing to provide charitable and community services from the premises serving the local community which is deemed to represent

comparable value in terms of community benefits. The asset is still retained by the County Council in terms of title should the future position change.

---

## **Supporting Details**

### **4. Background Information**

- 4.1. Following the decision to cease direct service delivery of Youth Services by the Council in 2015, the Council was faced with deciding what to do with the premises previously used for the Youth Service. A number of these premises were leased to community groups and charitable organisations who wanted to continue to provide similar services in the area. Stone Youth Centre was one of these premises where Rising Brook Baptist Church took a lease of 5 years from February 2018 at a rent of £1 per annum to provide charitable and community services from the premises. This use has continued since 2018 and has been significantly expanded and enhanced now resulting in the organisation wishing to carry out improvements to the premises to provide better facilities which they would be reluctant to do without a longer-term lease in place. A location plan of the site is attached - Appendices 1.
- 4.2. The tenant contacted the County Council requesting a longer-term lease to enable them to improve the car parking provision which is currently very small and inadequate for the number of people wishing to use the centre. Due to the proximity of the railway station, there is very little car parking available outside the property in the immediate area on weekdays as many commuters park in the nearby roads. There is a sports hall attached to the centre which the Church wishes to carry out work to as due to the nature of its current construction it suffers badly from condensation resulting in the playing surface becoming slippery and dangerous to users on occasions.
- 4.3. With the planned investment in the building, the tenant requested a longer-term lease of 15 years at the same nominal rent of £1 per annum as the current agreement in order to be able to hopefully attract grant funding and make the considerable investment required in the premises worthwhile undertaking.
- 4.4. The tenant has sent me a copy of their most recent report and accounts which sets out the finances of the organisation (Appendix 2). They deal with this property and their other related properties together under the one set of accounts and expenditure on one set of premises may be subsidised by the activities and income received in others. The accounts would appear to indicate that they have sufficient funds to adequately maintain and run the premises, and indeed my inspections of the property confirms this view. They have

also sent a copy of a report setting out the ethos of what they are trying to achieve in the Stone Youth Centre premises, with details of the local organisations that currently make use of the property on a regular basis on pages 4 and 5 of this report (Appendix 3). I have also visited the centre on a number of occasions and found it to be well used.

- 4.5. If a new longer lease is granted there will need to be some amendments to the new lease compared to the current agreement to permit the alterations to the premises that the tenant wishes to carry out as the current lease prohibits alterations. Various other amendments would also need to be incorporated into the agreement regarding break clauses etc as the clauses in the original agreement in these respects would not necessarily be appropriate for a longer-term lease.

## **5. Alternative Options**

The main alternative option open to the Council would be to terminate any occupational arrangement with the current occupier and place the property on the market for sale. This may generate the County Council a significant capital receipt which could be in excess of £2,000,000 should planning permission for residential development be obtained on the whole of the land although this is by no means a certainty bearing in mind the Station Approach Road giving access to the property is not a public highway maintainable at public expense. Furthermore, the loss of a sports facility here may cause the planners very significant concern leading to potential developers having difficulty in obtaining planning consent for a profitable development on the site.

## **6. Implications of Transaction for County Council (Risks)**

Strategic – None identified

Financial – The financial risk will be the capital or rental receipt of money if the property were to be sold or rented to a commercial organisation instead of granting this proposed new lease.

Operational – None identified.

Legal – None identified in following the recommendations of this report.

## **7. Community Impact\***

The services provided by this tenant serve many members of the local community in Stone and the surrounding areas as can be seen by the business plan submitted in support of the application for a new lease. The

work of the centre helps various members of the local community to be healthier and more independent and also to feel safer, happier and more supported in their community.

## **8. Comments from Local Member**

To be reported to the Committee.

## **9. Support/Approval of the Proposal**

Head of Corporate Assets



Signed:

Name: Lee Wells

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023

## **10. Author/Valuer/Officer Advising on this Transaction**

**Report Author:** Paul Causer  
**Job Title:** Estates and Valuation Manager  
**E-Mail Address:** paul.causer@staffordshire.gov.uk

---

## **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Location Plan  
Appendix 2 – Financial Accounts  
Appendix 3 – Tenant’s report on the use of the premises.

---

\*3 priority Outcomes for the people of Staffordshire are:

- To be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth
- To be healthier and more independent
- To feel safer, happier, and more supported in their community.