



Committee

Cabinet

Date and Time

8th July 2026, 10.30 am

Public

Bridgnorth Youth Centre, Innage Lane (Formerly know as - Bridgnorth Youth Club – Asset Decision)

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|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Roger Evans – Portfolio Holder for Finance | |
| Lead Director: | Kassandra Polyzoides, Service Director | |
| Service Area: | Place Shaping – Property and Development | |
| Report Author | Victoria Woodford – Asset Manager | |
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| Electoral Divisions Affected | Bridgnorth Castle, Bridgnorth East, Bridgnorth South & Alveley, and Bridgnorth West and Tasley | |
| Key Decision? | Key | |
| Cabinet Forward Plan | 16/04/26 | |
| Report considered by | | |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to declare the former Bridgnorth, Youth Centre site at Innage Lane surplus to requirements and to dispose of it on the open market. The property has been vacant for 18 months, is in poor condition and is no longer required for operational use. Having considered the alternative options, disposal is recommended as the preferred outcome, enabling the Council to realise a capital receipt, remove ongoing holding and maintenance liabilities, and support its wider programme of financial sustainability by contributing towards the reduction of reliance on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 2.1 Declares the former Bridgnorth Youth Centre, Innage Lane (in accordance with the red line plan detailed in Appendix A) surplus to requirements and approves its disposal as a non-core asset.
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Head of Property and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to take all necessary steps to progress disposal, including determination of the appropriate disposal strategy and completion of the sale in accordance with the Council's constitutional and legal requirements.

3. Background

- 3.1 The former Bridgnorth Youth Centre, Innage Lane site has been subject to review for a number of years as part of the Council's ongoing assessment of its operational property portfolio. The facility was formally mothballed during the Covid-19 pandemic and, following its reopening, utilisation remained limited.
- 3.2 The site closed in November 2024 following the implementation of savings proposals approved through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The property has remained vacant since closure and is no longer required for operational purposes. Prior to closure, two services were delivered at Bridgnorth Youth Centre, Innage Lane. Shropshire Youth Association (SYA) using the building one evening per week. Following relocation, youth services continued successfully elsewhere in Bridgnorth. Youth provision is also supported by a locally run charity group. Early Help used the building a couple of days a week before relocating to Bridgnorth Library in November 2024 as part of Community and Family Hub model.
- 3.3 Condition survey information indicates that the building is in poor condition and would require substantial remedial works before it could be safely and sustainably brought back into use, particularly in relation to mechanical services, including the replacement of the heating system and associated plant. Given the uncertainty surrounding the future use of the building and wider financial pressures facing the Council, only essential maintenance has been undertaken in recent years.
- 3.4 Previous expressions of interest have been received from a range of prospective occupiers, including community organisations, nursery providers and commercial operators. However, the level of investment required to address the building's condition and bring it to an appropriate standard for occupation has significantly constrained the viability of alternative re-use opportunities.
- 3.5 A refurbishment and reoccupation option has not been progressed as there is currently no identified operational requirement for the property. Since closure, no Council service has expressed a need to reoccupy the building and the cost of bringing the asset back into use would be disproportionate in the absence of a defined service demand.

- 3.6 Stakeholder and options appraisal: The options considered focused on achieving a sustainable outcome for the Council and community whilst reducing risk and future financial liabilities:
- Disposal on the open market
 - Redevelopment for housing with STAR Housing; and
 - Transfer to Bridgnorth Town Council
- 3.7 Options were analysed by officers and have informed the recommendations made within this report.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

- 4.1. The former Bridgnorth Youth Centre, Innage Lane site is currently vacant, is no longer required for operational purposes and would require significant capital investment before it could be safely and sustainably brought back into use. A range of potential future uses have been considered, including community, commercial and residential options, together with the retention of the asset.
- 4.2. Disposal of the site has been identified as the option that provides the greatest overall benefit to the Council. It would:
- Generate an additional capital receipt;
 - Remove ongoing holding, maintenance and security costs;
 - Eliminate future investment liabilities associated with the building; and
 - Support the continued rationalisation of the Council's operational estate.
- 4.3. Having considered the condition of the building, the absence of an identified operational requirement, the substantial investment required to facilitate reoccupation and the Council's wider financial objectives, disposal is recommended as the preferred option.
- 4.4. The proposed disposal supports the Council's Corporate Plan priority of delivering a financially sustainable council. It would generate a capital receipt, reduce ongoing revenue pressures and future liabilities, and contribute to the Council's broader programme of financial sustainability, including reducing reliance on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 Housing Redevelopment - The potential redevelopment of the site for housing purposes, including consideration of a delivery model involving STAR Housing, was explored. However, the option was not considered viable when assessed against the Council's current financial and investment criteria. Key considerations included the risks associated with the proposed acquisition and buy-back model, uncertainty regarding the level and availability of external investment required, an extended estimated payback period of approximately 38 years, and the more limited short-term financial benefit when compared with disposal of the asset.

- 5.2 Town and Parish Council Asset Transfer - A transfer of the asset to Bridgnorth Town Council was explored; however, the Town Council did not wish to progress the opportunity. Concerns were raised regarding the condition of the building, the scale of investment required to address known defects and ongoing maintenance liabilities, together with an absence of clearly evidenced demand for future occupation and use.
- 5.3 Having considered the alternative options; disposal is recommended as the preferred option. This reflects the condition of the building, the absence of an operational requirement and the significant investment that would be required to bring the property back into use.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

| Risk | Mitigation | Link to Strategic Risk |
|---|--|--|
| Vacant building continues to deteriorate If left unused, the building will worsen in condition, increasing repair costs, security risks, and reducing future usability | Time-limited decision pathway; maintain appropriate security and minimal maintenance while decision is implemented | Asset sustainability and financial resilience |
| Delays in decision making Slow progress could lead to more costs, uncertainty for stakeholders, and reduced momentum for future use. | Proactively engage and brief key stakeholders in advance of formal decision-making. | Delivery, governance and decision-making |
| Health and safety risks The building is not currently fit for occupation and could pose risks if used without major investment. | Prevent occupation until safety standards are met | Health, safety and statutory compliance |
| Reputational risk There may be concern that the Council is removing a community facility | Communicate clearly with stakeholders about reasons for the decision | Reputation, community confidence and stakeholder trust |
| Reduced disposal value The site may achieve a lower sale value due to its condition and need for remedial works. | Use professional advice and strong marketing to maximise disposal value | Asset value and financial return |

7. Council Priorities

- 7.1 The proposed disposal supports the Council's Corporate Plan priority to deliver a financially sustainable council by rationalising the operational estate, reducing ongoing liabilities and generating a capital receipt from an asset that is no longer required for service delivery.
- 7.2 The proposal also supports the effective stewardship of Council assets by enabling resources to be focused on properties that are needed to deliver priority services, while avoiding further deterioration, maintenance costs and risk associated with retaining a vacant building in poor condition.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 For 2026/27, the Government has agreed Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) for Shropshire Council to help manage its financial pressures. As part of that support, the Council is expected to deliver robust improvement and transformation plans to restore financial stability, including accelerating asset disposals and identifying opportunities to generate capital. Capital receipts from the disposal of surplus assets will help fund the EFS requirement while continuing the rationalisation of the estate. This will also reduce future repairs and maintenance liabilities, along with associated revenue and capital funding pressures.
- 8.2 The proposed disposal forms part of the Council's ongoing programme of asset rationalisation and financial recovery. As the asset is not currently assumed within the capital receipt estimates supporting the existing capital programme, its disposal would generate an additional capital receipt while removing future liabilities associated with a vacant building. This would support the Council's wider financial sustainability objectives and contribute towards reducing reliance on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).
- 8.3 **Capital Receipt:** Disposal is expected to generate the highest capital return. Market appraisals indicate a range of values, supporting consideration of disposal as a viable option.
- 8.4 **Revenue savings:** Disposal removes ongoing costs including maintenance, utilities and asset management.
- 8.5 **Avoided Costs:** The building is in poor condition, and significant work would be required before it could be brought back into use. Major mechanical services issues have been identified, including replacement of the heating boiler and associated plant and controls, together with works required to address hot water provision and broader mechanical condition.
- 8.6 **Opportunity Cost:** Retaining the asset while vacant presents ongoing risks and potential costs (including security, reactive maintenance, and further deterioration) with no operational benefit. A community transfer may reduce future Council liabilities but would only be appropriate if the receiving organisation can demonstrate a sustainable plan to meet repair, compliance, and operational costs. Disposal would remove the ongoing maintenance liability and could deliver a capital receipt, subject to market conditions and site constraints.

9. Legal and HR implications

- 9.1 The Council has power to dispose of land held by it in accordance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, subject to compliance with the Council's Constitution, its property governance arrangements and any other statutory requirements. If approved, the recommendation would enable the asset to be declared surplus to operational requirements and for disposal to be progressed in accordance with those requirements and with the benefit of appropriate professional and legal advice.
- 9.2 Delegated authority should only be exercised in accordance with the Council's constitutional framework and following completion of the necessary title, valuation, planning and legal due diligence. The decision proposed in this report does not in itself give rise to direct workforce implications, as the building is already vacant and no staff are based at the site.

10. Electoral Division Implications

- 10.1 The site is located in Bridgnorth and the proposal is therefore of direct relevance to the Bridgnorth Castle, Bridgnorth East, Bridgnorth South and Alveley, and Bridgnorth West and Tasley electoral divisions. Local members have been engaged and informed of the recommendations.

11. Health, Social (including "Child Friendly Shropshire") and Economic Implications

- 11.1 The proposal does not remove an operational service currently delivered from the site. Youth and family support services previously based at Innage Lane have already been relocated and continue to be delivered from alternative venues in Bridgnorth. The disposal of a vacant building in poor condition is therefore not expected to give rise to direct adverse health impacts arising from loss of current service provision.
- 11.2 From a social and economic perspective, disposal would remove an underused and deteriorating asset from the Council's estate, reduce ongoing revenue and maintenance pressures, and create the opportunity for the site to be brought back into productive use through redevelopment or alternative occupation. While there may be community interest in the future of the site, this is balanced by the fact that the current building is no longer fit for purpose and is not supporting Child Friendly Shropshire outcomes in its present condition.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 The proposal does not in itself remove a current operational service from the site, as services previously delivered from the building have already been relocated. On that basis, no direct adverse equality impacts have been identified from the decision to declare the asset surplus and progress disposal.

- 12.2 An Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment should be completed or updated, if required, as part of implementation and any material issues identified should be reflected in the final disposal approach. No specific implications for the Armed Forces community have been identified at this stage, but due regard should continue to be given to the Armed Forces Covenant alongside the Council's wider equality duties.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 The recommended approach is expected to have a neutral to positive climate change impact. Continuing to hold a vacant, inefficient building is likely to result in avoidable energy and maintenance-related carbon impacts over time. Enabling a disposal that facilitates retrofit and occupation provides the opportunity to reduce operational energy use and associated emissions, consistent with the Council's climate strategy and net-zero ambition.

14. Background Papers

- 14.1 There are no background papers

15. Appendices

Appendix A - Location Plan – Bridgnorth Innage Lane – June 2026