

Economy and Property Committee	
Meeting Date	7 th July 2026
Report Title	Disposal of Queenborough Guildhall, associated land and 44 High Street, Queenborough
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson, Head Place Services
Lead Officer	David Johnson MRICS, Interim Property Services Consultant
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To confirm the decision of the Economy and Property Committee on 9 April 2025 regarding the disposal of the parcel of land known as land rear of Queenborough Guildhall and to include the transfer of the Guildhall and 44 High Street, Queenborough to Queenborough Town Council. 2. To extend the delegation to the Head of Place Services to negotiate, agree and complete the terms of the disposal within a further period of 6 months (or such longer period as may be agreed in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the Head of Legal Services).

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Economy and Property meeting of the 9 April 2025 it was resolved:
“That the Head of Place be given delegated authority to negotiate and agree terms of the disposal of the parcel of land known as land rear of Queenborough Guildhall, to include the transfer of the Guildhall and 44 High Street, to Queenborough Town Council, within a 12 month period.”
- 1.2 This report updates Members on progress towards the proposed transfer. Given that the original delegation to the Head of Place to complete the transaction within 12 months has passed, the report seeks confirmation of the Committee’s decision of 9 April 2025 and an extension of the delegation previously granted to allow the transaction to complete.
- 1.3 Swale Borough Council (SBC)'s adopted Property Asset Strategy sets out the requirement to: “Make it a priority that the Council only retain land and property where it makes strategic or financial sense to do so. This should be to deliver services in line with corporate priorities, to generate income, to provide a return on investment, to enable regeneration or to provide social value.”

- 1.4 The report sets out why officers recommend that concluding the disposal as per the previous resolution would be in line with this policy and would deliver benefits to both the Council and the local community.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Land to the rear of Queenborough Guildhall (plan at Appendix I) lies adjacent to Pipsqueaks Nursery on North Road and comprises a rectangular shaped parcel of land with an area of approximately 350sqm. It has been vacant for a number of years and is currently in a poor state with vegetation and the remains of a metal frame building.
- 2.2 In 2019 Heads of Terms were agreed for a 25-year lease on much of the site with Queenborough Rowing Club (QRC). This would have in turn released the Club's existing council owned site, which also offered potential for development, with a Cabinet decision (25th September 2019) to dispose of this via auction should the rowing club move.
- 2.3 However, due to a range of issues QRC confirmed it was not in a position to proceed. Consequently, the triggers for considering a disposal were met.
- 2.4 There are some complications to affect a disposal. The title of the site is split, with the majority falling into a title incorporating Queenborough Guildhall, which is occupied by Queenborough Town Council (QTC). A proportion of the site would also need to be retained to allow access to the rear of Queenborough Guildhall for access and maintenance.
- 2.5 Of the 350sq m it is estimated that circa 270sq m of the land could be disposed of for a meaningful use.
- 2.6 There have been a number of approaches to officers from interested parties, for commercial use or development. SBC was also approached by QTC in 2024 as to the possibility of it securing the site.
- 2.7 At present QTC occupies a number of rooms within Queenborough Guildhall and the adjacent 44 High Street, under licence from Swale Borough Council. QTC are now struggling for space and the approach regarding the land was driven by a need to create more room for storage and the operation of a foodbank.
- 2.8 It was agreed by the Economy and Property Committee in April 2025 that the land should be part of a wider transaction involving the transfer of the Guildhall and 44 High Street, Queenborough to QTC (titles are shown at Appendix II).
- 2.9 Such a transfer to QTC continues to offer potential advantages that may outweigh the likely capital receipt, including simplifying and consolidating the property holdings; providing certainty for QTC over its occupation and future service delivery; enabling local control and stewardship of a heritage asset

and reducing current and future management, maintenance and insurance liabilities to Swale Borough Council and any successor authority.

- 2.10 Since the Committee's decision on 9 April 2025, officers have continued to progress the proposed transaction with Queenborough Town Council. Heads of Terms have been substantially agreed between the parties. Both Swale Borough Council and Queenborough Town Council have now formally instructed their respective legal representatives to prepare, negotiate and complete the necessary documentation.
- 2.13 In order to protect the long-term public and community benefit of the assets and to prevent inappropriate development, the transfer to Queenborough Town Council will be made subject to restrictive covenants. These covenants will require that the Guildhall, 44 High Street and the land to the rear continue to be used for purposes which deliver a demonstrable public or community benefit, including community activities, heritage interpretation and stewardship, cultural or educational uses, public services, or storage and operational use ancillary to the functions of Queenborough Town Council. The covenants will expressly prohibit any material development, change of use, or disposal of the assets (or any part of them) without the prior written consent of Swale Borough Council. The transfer documentation will also include suitable provisions to ensure that the public accessibility and community benefit of the assets is maintained. These restrictions will bind Queenborough Town Council and its successors in title and will be directly enforceable by Swale Borough Council and its successors.
- 2.11 The original delegation to the Head of Place was time-limited to a period of twelve months. That period has now expired. Subject to final agreement on any outstanding points and the execution of formal documentation, it is anticipated that the transaction should complete within the next six months.
- 2.12 Given the clear progress made, the public and community benefits that will flow from the transaction and the fact that both parties are now substantially advanced towards completing the deal, members are asked to confirm the April 2025 decision and extend the delegation to allow the transaction to be finalised.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 To confirm the decision of the Economy and Property Committee on 9 April 2025 regarding the disposal of the parcel of land known as land rear of Queenborough Guildhall and to include the transfer of the Guildhall and 44 High Street, Queenborough to Queenborough Town Council.
- 3.2 To extend the delegation to the Head of Place Services to negotiate, agree and complete the terms of the disposal within a further period of six months (or such longer period as may be agreed in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the Head of Legal Services).

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 To place the developable site to the rear of the Guildhall on the open market for freehold sale or lease, leaving the option for QTC to let the land remaining. This option should be considered if negotiations over the proposed land consolidation with QTC stall and fail to complete.
- 4.2 This option is not recommended at this time. Work against towards the Committee resolution is well advanced and the context remains the same. The transfer to Queenborough Town Council is still expected to deliver the benefits set out in this and the report to the Economy and property Committee on the 9 April 2025.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed Considered and Rejected

- 5.1 There have been no further consultations on this proposal, outside of discussion with Queenborough Town Council. The resolution made on the 9th April 2025 was supported by the ward Members.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The transaction with QTC would support the Community priority to “Work in partnership with the local towns and parishes and voluntary sector on our community assets – e.g., playgrounds, sports pitches and pavilions, community halls”. Disposal of the site on the open market would generate a capital receipt that would support the Council’s wider financial position.
Financial, Resource and Property	Whilst the proposal would potentially forgo a capital receipt, the proposal looks to reduce the Council’s future liabilities which would potentially exceed the benefit of such, over time. In the 2025/26 financial year the property represented a net revenue cost the Council of £2,500 (excluding building maintenance).
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Council has fairly wide discretion to dispose of its property assets. When disposing of assets, the Council is subject to statutory provisions, in particular, to the overriding duty, under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, to obtain the best consideration that can be reasonably obtained for the disposal. This duty is subject to certain exceptions that are set out in the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003. The council has the option to disregard the requirement for best consideration if the transaction is valued at under £2 million and if the disposal is in support of the council's key priorities and strategic goals.

	Legal will be required to draft relevant contracts with instructions from Property Services. Any future development proposals for the site would be subject to all necessary consents and if transferred the property would be covenanted so as to require the agreement of Swale Borough Council or its successor authority.
Crime and Disorder	The Land to the rear of Queenborough Guildhall remaining vacant and unused could possibly be a target for anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. A disposal to allow beneficial use will remove this risk.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	An unoccupied, unsightly and underused site is at odds with the council's goals and adopted Property Asset Strategy. Any future planning consent would need to meet the Bio-diversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements and ensure that the appearance and setting of heritage assets is preserved and where possible enhanced.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The proposal reduces the Council's risk in terms of holding a vacant property.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.
Local Government Reform	The proposal would contribute to the rationalisation of the Council's estate and see the transfer of an important local heritage asset to QTC, prior to any Local Government reorganisation. Covenants on the property would pass to the successor authority.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Site Plan
- Appendix II: Title Plans

8 Background Papers

Land Rear of Queenborough Guildhall, Report to the Economy & Property Committee, 9th April 2025