

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Assets

Date of Meeting:	21 st December 2015
Report:	County Land Agent
Subject/Title:	Ridley Farms Estate - Lettings
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Don Stockton

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Moss, Centenary & Mount Pleasant Farms have been advertised 'to let' from 1st April 2016 following on, in the two latter cases, where congratulations are due to the outgoing tenants who have secured tenancies of larger farms on privately owned estates.
- 1.2 Lettings for farms are for a period of up to 15 years or up to age 65, typically with 5 year break clauses and they are advertised on the open market. Prospective tenants are invited to submit their farming proposals and business plans identifying the term that they propose, any investment that they propose or require and the rent payable, by informal tender.
- 1.3 Portfolio Holder approval is required for leases of more than 7 years and accordingly the following recommendation seeks said approval.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the letting for Moss, Centenary & Mount Farms individually, for periods of up to 15 years and authorise Officers to take all necessary actions to implement the proposal.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The letting of the named farms is consistent with the approved management strategy for the Ridley Farms Estate.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Wrenbury

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Councillor S Davies

6.0 Policy Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Implications for Rural Communities

7.1 The lettings progress the implementation of the estate strategy and underpin the viability of the individual farms, estate and service.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 Typically, tendering results in an uplift of receivable rents but the industry is experiencing difficult trading circumstances with an oversupply of milk and lack of competitive milk supply contracts and although reductions are not predicted, it is too early in the process to give a reliable prediction for the total gain.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 Relevant consideration will have to be given for each transaction to the level of authority required under the Constitution.

9.2 The Council has the power to grant a lease of the land pursuant to s123 of The Local Government Act 1972 subject to any disposal for 7 years or more being at the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained.

9.3 Notwithstanding the above powers the Council has a fiduciary duty to the taxpayers and must fulfil this duty in a way which is accountable to local people.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 N/a

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 The overarching farms estate strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2012 and supplemented by the findings of a Cabinet Review Group during 2013, including improving the scale and type of opportunities to farm for new entrants and those seeking progression as provided by the three identified farms.

11.2 Options for the structure of the Ridley Farms estate were considered and approved in October 2015 confirming that Moss, Centenary & Mount Pleasant Farms should be offered as Entry Level 1, Level 2 & Level 2 opportunities respectively.

12.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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