

APPENDIX A

May I start by thanking this Select Committee in allowing me to make a statement in relation to the two decisions which I made RE/2006/00200 and RE/2006/00221. These two decisions are not in fact to sell the NICC or the adjacent land, but to appoint agents to work on our behalf. In terms of the proposal to use external Agents, Corporate Property works closely with private sector partners and, in view of the nature and potential interest in this property, it was considered appropriate to use the services of external surveyors from the County Council's Framework Agreement. A further report would have been produced with recommendations once this work had been completed.

I think it will become clear that by allowing me to do this it will save a considerable amount of time and effort for all those involved.

If I could give a brief summary of these decisions. If the Committee could also appreciate that some previous decisions came from the regeneration portfolio budget which is not in my domain.

It should also be noted that the opposition spokesperson is invited to attend all my property portfolio meetings and I do not recall any concerns when this matter was brought there.

Back in January 2006 a Members' Reference Group was set up and the purpose of this was to review the work of the portfolio and to take decisions about the future directions and activities it will support in order to make £2million savings. This Group Chaired by the Leader of the Council considered closing NICC.

At a further meeting in February the Group confirmed the priorities and approach and forwarded decisions taken by Council at the meeting later in February. Unfortunately, there had been no indication of these meetings referred at the full Council meeting on the 23rd February.

A draft report was produced by the Service Director (Community and Safety/Regeneration and Protection) which was not dated, but was drafted around March 2006. This report identifies the options of the closure of the NICC which referred to the Members' Reference Group.

The draft recommendations were that the NICC was surplus to the regeneration division's requirements for the delivery of services and the responsibility of the building be transferred to corporate property. This report was not formally submitted to any meeting as key staff in regeneration division left the Authority.

In April 2006 work was commissioned on a feasibility study on the NICC and the possibility of the premises used for Notts Connect.

In June I met with officers from corporate property, finance, design services, architects and regeneration. After a further meeting it was deemed that the NICC was too small and in particular if it was to include the Home Office 101 requirement. Other options were pursued for Notts Connect and Space 27 at Annesley Business Park was identified by them as a preferred location.

At the October full Council meeting a report by the Cabinet Member for Culture and Regeneration provided an update and the NICC ceased to operate from the 29th September. Corporate Property now has the responsibility for the Centre and the remaining tenants. It had therefore been agreed that the NICC was surplus to the regeneration requirements.

Corporate Property is now considering the future of the Centre and it is likely that it will be sold along with the adjacent land which has been surplus to the requirements for some time and although marketed it did not progress to completion whilst issues relating to an undocumented easement together with the transfer of part of the site to the national school Hucknall were resolved.

Nottinghamshire County Council, as a large property and land holding Authority, cannot and should not continue to maintain and keep property when they are surplus to service departments' requirements. In the new corporate property strategy it clearly identifies the need to reduce the amount of properties which we either own or lease and replace them with fit for purpose offices that are not only cost effective, but also produce efficiency savings with the principles of value for money for which the residents of Nottinghamshire would expect.

I, as the decision-maker, will reconsider both of these decisions and that these decisions will be logged as a key decision and reported in the Forward Plan. I accept that in this instance a more detailed report could have been produced and I do accept that procedural mistakes were made in the way this decision was taken. I am satisfied that this decision to close the NICC was taken in good faith in the best interests of this authority. I also believe that it was a correct decision I will also ensure that my Service Director will instigate training for those who are responsible in producing corporate property reports.