

CABINET

Tuesday, 10 July 2012

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| <u>Present:</u> | Councillor | P Davies (Chair) | Finance |
| | Councillors | G Davies P Hackett AER Jones A McArdle AR McLachlan C Meaden H Smith | Housing and Community Safety Regeneration and Planning Strategy Corporate Resources Adult Social Care and Public Health Improvement and Governance Culture, Tourism and Leisure Streetscene and Transport Services |
| <u>Apologies</u> | Councillors | B Kenny T Smith | Environment Children's Services and Lifelong Learning |

42 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

43 PROUDMAN OCEANOGRAPHIC LABORATORY, BIDSTON HILL

At the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 June 2012, Members had considered a report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management that sought approval to a request from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) to demolish the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory on Bidston Hill. (Minute No. 5 refers)

Members had indicated that they had been contacted by concerned constituents regarding a previous planning decision made in 2004 with reference to the Unitary Development Plan stating that use of the building should not be changed.

The Head of Asset Management had confirmed that demolition of the building as detailed in Section 4 of the report did not require consent for change of use.

However, Members asked for consideration of the report to be deferred to this Special meeting to allow Officers time to provide further clarification.

Consequently, an updated report was presented to the Cabinet on this matter. The Head of Asset Management, who was in attendance at the meeting, informed that the Bidston Preservation Trust (BPT) had identified the Proudman Building as being suitable for use as a Taiko Drumming Centre and had therefore requested 'a stay of execution' before demolition in order to give it time to acquire the necessary funding.

As the building was owned by NERC, the BPT had been directed to NERC's agents in order that it could explore the proposal in more detail. The proposal was being developed by the Rock Ferry Community Partnership, which established the Wirral

Taiko Dragon Drumming project. The Partnership hoped to instruct consultants to develop its proposal in detail and intended to contact NERC to register its proposal for the building. Consent for the demolition under the terms of the lease would not prevent these discussions taking place and was still considered appropriate.

The Cabinet noted that the site of the Proudman Observatory had previously been shown in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as being subject to Policy EM11 (a policy specific to Bidston Observatory and the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory). In 2007, that policy had been deleted (Cabinet meeting on 28 March 2007, Minute 314 refers) and was therefore no longer part of the development plan. The site was now shown as without notation and any planning applications that might be submitted for the site would be subject to other policies of the UDP, particularly those relating to impact on Listed Buildings and the Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value. The advice within the National Planning Policy Framework would also be a material consideration in the determination of any planning application.

Letters had been received from residents who lived adjacent to the Laboratory and circulated to Members, making the point that although the property had been marketed for a number of years no suitable offers had been received. They were in favour of the building being demolished.

The Head of Asset Management reported that yesterday he had been made aware that the BPT had applied to English Heritage for Listed Building Consent. He therefore, recommended the Cabinet to defer its decision to allow him to obtain advice regarding the way forward. The Cabinet noted that it was accepted good practice not to give consent to the demolition of the Laboratory whilst a decision on Listed Building Consent was awaited from English Heritage and that it may be over six months before this determination was received because of the various processes English Heritage would follow. In the meantime, the Council could undertake work in terms of the heritage value of the Laboratory.

The Head of Legal and Member Services informed that if the Cabinet made a decision to demolish the Laboratory before English Heritage had made a determination on the application for Listed Building Consent it may cause reputational harm to the Council, if later, English Heritage agreed that the building should be listed. Alternatively, such a decision by the Cabinet at this time could result in legal action.

The Cabinet was aware that if its decision on demolition of the Laboratory was deferred until a decision was made by English Heritage on whether to grant Listed Building Consent the result would be that NERC would continue to incur costs.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in the light of the new information provided, the Council, in its capacity as freeholder, defers its decision on whether to consent, in accordance with the terms of the lease, to the demolition of the Proudman Laboratory building, pending the application to English Heritage for Listed Building Status;**

- (2) **Officers make early contact with English Heritage to request that it expedites its processes, in respect of its decision on whether to grant Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory Listed Building Consent; and**
- (3) **a further report be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 6 September 2012, when hopefully the outcome of TDC's application to English Heritage for Listed Building Consent for Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory, is known.**

44 **CORPORATE PLAN**

A report by the Acting Chief Executive provided details and included an updated 2012-13 Corporate Plan for consideration and referral to Council on 16 July 2012 (Minute No. 163 refers)

The report indicated that it had taken into account the work that had been undertaken to develop an Improvement Plan for the Council based on the priorities developed with the Improvement Board.

The refreshed and reworked Corporate Plan contained the five improvement priorities and the Cabinet noted that it was the key document to help the Council shape the budget process for the rest of the year and would lead to the development of a new Corporate Plan.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) **the draft Corporate Plan be referred for approval and adoption by the Council at its meeting on the 16 July 2012; and**
- (2) **the Corporate Policy Manager be thanked for her help in refreshing and reworking the draft Corporate Plan.**

45 **CORPORATE AND BUSINESS PLANNING - CONSULTATION PROCESS**

A report by the Acting Chief Executive indicated that Wirral's emerging Improvement Plan included a priority focus to put in place an agreed Corporate Plan that set clear priorities reflecting a good understanding of citizens and customers' views through consultation, participation and localism.

The report also set out the proposed arrangements for developing a long-term corporate and financial planning framework through a comprehensive programme of consultation and engagement. The process would deliver:

- A 3-year Corporate Plan and Financial Plan for 2013 onwards, which provided the framework for the Council's key plans and strategies
- An Equality Action Plan

An update of the current Corporate Plan for (2012-13) was subject to a separate report (Minute No. 44 refers). This report provided the strategic direction required in the current financial year to deliver improvements and address the critical issues set out in the emerging Improvement Plan.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the approach, timetable and communications plan for developing a three-year corporate and financial planning framework be agreed; and**
- (2) the Officer Team who has worked on this comprehensive plan to consult, be thanked for its hard work, it is much appreciated.**