

WIRRAL COUNCIL

DELEGATED DECISION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

## **HOYLAKE LIFEBOAT STATION, HOYLAKE**

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### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve the sale of the car park adjoining the original Lifeboat Station in Hoylake.
- 1.2 The financial implications are an exempt item as the terms of sale are part of a commercial contract between Peel Ports and the purchaser Mr M Rice. The disclosure of the sale price could affect the future marketing of the site if the sale does not complete.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010, Cabinet approved terms for the sale of the car park adjoining the original lifeboat station in Hoylake.
- 2.2 This followed a joint marketing exercise conducted by Mason Partners involving the Lifeboat Building owned by Peel Ports and the car park adjoining, owned by the Council.
- 2.3 On 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010, the decision was called in on the grounds that:-
- “The proposal runs counter to the criteria for regeneration of the area and that the proposal for use would not be consistent with this designation. The proposal would also be detrimental to The Kings Gap Conservation Area.”
- 2.4 The matter was considered by the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010 and referred to the Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 where it was resolved that:-
- 1) The decision to dispose of the land at the former Hoylake Lifeboat Station be deferred for a period of three months from the date of the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010.
  - 2) Officers seek to facilitate discussions between Peel Holdings and the proponents of a Hoylake Lifeboat Museum in this time; and
  - 3) A report on these discussions be prepared to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for decision under delegated powers.

### **3. Progress of the Resolutions**

- 3.1 A meeting was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2010 attended by the Head of Asset Management, the Chief Estates Surveyor of Peel Ports Group and Mr John Parr, who is interested in setting up a Hoylake Lifeboat Museum. Mr Parr outlined his proposals and was advised of the three month deadline set by Cabinet. At the meeting, Peel Ports stated

that the building would not be available at a peppercorn rent. Mr Parr agreed that he would have to either put together a viable scheme or decide not to progress and that he would let the Council know of his intentions.

- 3.2 It was also explained at the meeting that, whilst Peel Ports was a subsidiary of Peel Holdings, it was autonomous and it would make a decision on disposal independent of the parent company.
- 3.3 However, in order to be certain of the Company's position, the Interim Chief Executive, wrote to Peel Developments (UK) Ltd, requesting the Company consider disposing of the property on a peppercorn basis. The Company has now confirmed to him that it would not do so, because it needs to maximise capital receipts from its surplus assets to help drive forward its strategic projects on the Wirral.
- 3.4 The three month deadline set by Cabinet expired on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2010. Mr Parr has not advised Asset Management of his intentions or submitted any scheme to progress this project, since the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> August.
- 3.5 However, on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2010, Asset Management was advised by Ms H Britton that she had made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to purchase the building and for five years running costs. Ms Britton confirmed by email on 18<sup>th</sup> October that, in partnership with Mr Parr, they wish to turn the lifeboat building into a working museum with Victorian tea rooms. The land adjacent would have a replica of an old Victorian seating area with benches and railings. Although the Director of Technical Services has concerns about most uses falling within Class A3 (restaurants and cafes) of the current Use Classes Order within the Primary Residential Area, it may be that an unobtrusive café use might be considered suitable, provided it does not harm residential amenity.
- 3.6 Ms Britton is currently understood to be publicly fund raising to support the project.
- 3.7 Local Ward Members have supported Mr Parr's proposal to use the building as a Lifeboat Museum. They are also concerned that any alternative use of the building and land may not be appropriate, given the location of the site and the building's individual nature.
- 3.8 One of the original bases of the joint disposal, agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009, was that the Council would not preclude, by imposition of covenants, any alternative use of the property, but rely on the purchaser securing a satisfactory consent. Given that the building and the car park are located within the Kings Gap Conservation Area, it is considered that the risk of obtaining permission for an inappropriate alternative use is highly unlikely.
- 3.9 Ultimately, it will be for the successful purchaser to satisfy the Planning Committee as to the appropriateness of any future use and Ward Members and local residents will have an opportunity to register their views as part of the planning application process.
- 3.10 Peel Port Group is very concerned over the delays and has advised that it wishes to see an immediate commercial disposal of its interest in the lifeboat building. If the Council is unable to commit to the sale of the car park, the Company will proceed with a sale of its building alone.
- 3.11 The car park has been declared a surplus asset and the Council has no operational use for the land. The successful original bidder still wishes to proceed with a joint

purchase of the building and car park, in accordance with terms set out in the Financial Implications, which are exempt. In the circumstances, it is recommended that these terms of sale be approved.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 These are included in the exempt Appendix 1 to this report.

#### **5. Staffing implications**

5.1 None

#### **6. Equal Opportunities/Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 None, the property has been advertised on the open market.

#### **7. Community Safety implications**

7.1 None

#### **8. Environmental Sustainability implications**

8.1 The sale of the property will bring back into use a vacant building.

#### **9. Planning implications**

9.1 The site is within a Primarily Residential Area allocated in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (saved September 2007) and the Kings Gap Conservation Area designated in April 2000. However, the Interim Planning Policy 'New Housing Development', October 2005, directs new housing development towards previously developed land with the HMRI and other identified Regeneration Priority Areas. Conversion for residential purposes is not normally permitted unless material considerations can be identified.

9.3 Conversion for small scale non residential uses can be considered under UDP Policies HS15 and CH2, which have criteria to protect the neighbour's amenity and the character of the area. Special regard will be given to detailed design in preserving or enhancing the character of the area.

#### **10. Anti-poverty implications**

10.1 None

#### **11. Human Rights implications**

11.1 None

#### **12. Local Member Support Implications**

12.1 This matter will be of interest to Ward Members in Hoylake and Meols.

#### **13. Social Inclusion implications**

13.1 None

**14. Background Papers**

14.1 Delegated Report – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009  
Cabinet Report – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010  
Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010

**15. RECOMMENDATION**

15.1 That approval is given to the disposal of the car park in accordance with the provisionally agreed terms set out in this report.

**Bill Norman**

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management