

CABINET PRIORITISATION SUB COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 17 MAY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Simon Dudley (Chairman), Phillip Bicknell (Vice-Chairman), David Coppinger and Carwyn Cox

Also in attendance: Councillor David Hilton, Councillor Malcolm Beer, Councillor John Bowden and Councillor Gerry Clark

Officers: Mary Kilner, Russell O'Keefe, Alison Alexander, Craig Miller, Andy Jeffs, Wendy Binmore and Rob Stubbs

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Targowska.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2017 be approved.

REPORT FROM CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - THE BROCKET

The Chairman of the of Corporate Services O&S Panel had agreed to the urgent report being added to the agenda to allow proposals to be implemented as soon as possible.

Councillor Clark introduced the report and stated the Brocket was a Grade II listed building in a dilapidated condition and had not been used for the last seven years. It had been noted that alternative uses for the Brocket had not been considered and at that point it was decided to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at alternative uses for the Grade II listed building. The Task and Finish Group met on several occasions and the last meeting was held 21 March 2017.

The Task and Finish Group carried out an open consultation which received 150 responses and provided a steer towards possible uses for the building. The suggestions included a Hindu Community Centre, art museum, arts heritage centre apartments and artists studios. None of the responses were of a volume to give a clear preference or included any funding or proposition that would be viable. At the meeting held on 21 March 2017, the Maidenhead Heritage Trust and the Maidenhead Arts attended the meeting and were asked to produce viable options but, no submissions were made to the Task and Finish Group.

In Councillor Clarks view, there were three classes of use for the Brocket. One was the Brocket fit in with the Council's current plans where a need was identified that fit in with a current planned operational budgeted use, however, he was not aware of any

such scheme. A second use that had not be considered yet was to advertise the building for an outside project to use, but again, Councillor Clark was unaware of any such use that had come forward. The third potential option which was the default option was for the building to be developed. There had been a long consultation period which had been running since January 2017 but, that had failed to identify a specific, viable use which could be put forward to the Panel.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and to Councillor Stretton for the work that had gone into finding a suitable use for the Brocket. The Chairman queried if there was a use for the building within the Council. Alison Alexander, Managing Director confirmed that there was no use for current services within the Borough or in the future. The Chairman stated that no one had come forward with proposals for a financially supported use for the Grade II listed building. Councillor Clerk confirmed to the Panel that the building in its current state was worth approximately £1m but, after redevelopment could be worth £2.3m. The Chairman stated the net yield was 3.5% at market rent and that the revenue contribution to the RBWM Property company would be in the region of £80k per annum. He added that on the one side, there was the possibility of an uncosted community asset and on the other side was the prospect of the Borough receiving income from developing the building.

The Managing Director stated the previous use of the Brocket was as a pupil referral unit but, there was no need for it now. Councillor Clark stated as a Grade II listed building, its main feature was the hall structure, the staircase and railings. The building was from the arts and crafts movement period and was originally built as a private house. It was difficult to find an alternative use and the development of the building would preserve the listed features.

Councillor Bicknell stated at the moment it was work £1m on the open market. It worried him that it could be sold quickly. If the Borough converted it into dwellings, it would be worth £2.3m. the Chairman said he did not see the building as a community use. It sat in a quiet residential street on a large plot. He felt the council should go to an estate agent that dealt with high end properties and get them to value the building. It was not going to be somewhere that was developed as a single house which was more in line with the London market; here in Maidenhead, if the building was sold as it was the Chairman was worried about what would happen to it. Would a developer leave it to ruin. He added he did not feel it should be converted to affordable rented apartments, he stated any apartments should be let for market rents. The Chairman said estate agents views should be sought on the building if converted and configured to be sympathetic to the original features; input would also be sought from Ward Members including Cllr Stretton and the council would try and preserve the building as a heritage asset. Councillor Cox commented that was a sensible plan. The building was on Boyn Hill Avenue near to the train station. It was a very attractive building with good transport links. It would be interesting to see what an estate agent values the property at.

Russell O'Keefe, Strategic Director Corporate & Community Services confirmed that if the building was converted to apartments for affordable rent, the income would be approximately £60k per annum. The Chairman stated it was an £80k per year building therefore, it would be sympathetically developed as apartments for private rent. Councillor Hilton stated it was not a challenge for the council to rent as it fit into the council's portfolio well and would generate income moving forward. Cllr Bicknell agreed that the building would become an asset generating income for the council.

The Chairman stated he wanted to know if there was a market for a single dwelling or, should the council develop it into flats. Councillor Bowden queried the figures for market rent as he had a look at one bedroom flats in the area which were selling for almost £1m; he suggested the building could be worth up to £4m. the Chairman confirmed the property was approximately 5,000 square feet in size which worked out at approximately £500 per square foot; he suggested the building was worth approximately £2.5m - £3m and that the council needed expert advice in that matter.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee noted the report and:

- i) Considered the suggested potential uses for the Brocket in Appendix 8 to identify whether the suggested use(s) fall into category a), b) or c) and then determined the preferred option:**
- ii) The Panel agreed a further option that Cabinet would like to proceed with the sympathetic conversion of the Brocket to apartments that would be rented at market value.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The meeting, which began at 9.00am, finished at 9.55am

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....