

EXECUTIVE & RESOURCES PDS COMMITTEE

8th October 2015

QUESTIONS TO THE RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

(1) From Mr Richard Gibbons -

Are all members aware that:

1. The community-led scheme referred to in item 3.18 envisages a sustainable solution for the Priory and former Library building drawing on the highly regarded Priory Revisited HLF bid; reconfiguring internal spaces to service emerging local health, education, business, community and visitor needs, complemented with an arts, culture and heritage offer?

2. The medieval Priory and former Library building designed by Seely & Paget (noted for their work at Eltham Palace and London Churches) are at the heart of the Orpington Priory Conservation Area which includes 6 statutory and 43 locally listed properties, with "many other primary and ancillary buildings ... contributing to its character and appearance"?

3. Support for the Save The Orpington Priory campaign group and its Orpington Priory Regeneration Project to retain the medieval Grade II* listed Priory and former Library building as a community asset within the Grade II listed Arts & Crafts Priory Gardens, including the Theatre Garden designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, continues unabated?

Reply:

I believe that the majority of members are aware that there is a developing local campaign to maintain the priory building as an asset of community value. The Council looks forward to receiving a detailed and sustainable business plan that supports this ambition from the Orpington Priory Campaign Group.

The STOP campaign's proposals and business plan will be reported to the Executive with any offers received (should the decision to market be confirmed) to enable Members to make an informed decision based on the options available.

Supplementary Question:

Mr Gibbons asked whether Members would be prepared to consider a temporary lease to the community group to ensure that the property was occupied, and reminded them that the property was an asset of community value.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that he would look at all options, however, the marketing process had to start and all submissions would receive due and fair consideration. The Council would be looking to find best value, which was not necessarily the lowest price.

Supplementary Question:

A Member asked how it was expected that the £1.7m needed to make the building DDA compliant could be found.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder responded that he would consider offers where the work was carried out over a longer time period, or where a scheme could be drawn up requiring a lower spend. There was also the possibility of attracting grants.

Supplementary Question:

A Member asked about insurance for the building, and suggested that an empty building would be more likely to suffer from vandalism or deterioration. Another Member commented that it had been hoped to find a long term solution as quickly as possible to avoid this.

Reply:

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he and senior officers would be prepared to listen to all suggestions.

(2) From Councillor Ian Dunn -

Your response to a question for written reply at the June Council meeting included the statement "Gateway report outlining options for Total Facilities Management would be prepared for Executive September 2015". This gateway report is not on the agenda for the October 2015 Executive meeting. Can you please explain what has delayed the production of this report and provide a forecast of when the report will be coming to the Executive. Also, can you inform the committee of any changes to the scope of the TFM?

Reply:

The TFM gateway report has been rescheduled for the Executive meeting on the 2nd December. The delay in bringing this report to members' attention was in the main due to the fact that a TFM feasibility study that was required to inform the report was itself delayed due to the need to update the Council's property data base.

The scope of the TFM project remains in line with the original scope, i.e. five key services, Strategic Property, Operational property, FM, Planning and Public Protection. Opportunities have been explored to bring three of these services, Strategic Property, Operational Property and FM to market earlier than originally advised through a Framework Agreement. The proposed Gateway report will address all of these issues.

Supplementary Question:

The Chairman asked whether there would be any cost to the Council arising from the delay.

Reply:

Councillor Arthur agreed that if the proposal did save money, it could not start doing this until it commenced. This was frustrating for Members, the public and staff in particular.