

**EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2010

**APPENDIX**

**ORAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM  
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**1) From Mr David Hunter:**

It is now one year on since my wife and I were shown around the Studio. We were shocked then to see the appalling state of the building. Conditions now, especially with the severe winter we are experiencing, must be a complete nightmare. I am specifically asking for the council's proposals since I suspect that any tender(s) would be unlikely in the current economic climate to shoulder the huge and what must be, rapidly rising costs single-handed!

***What are the Council's current proposals for the protection, repair and preservation of the Studio?***

**Reply:**

Terms have been agreed with Citygate Church for the building to be refurbished. The lessee will also be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the building with the exception of the main structure (walls, foundations and roof) for which the Council will continue to be responsible. In the meantime the Council has been undertaking essential maintenance, in particular roof repairs, repair of sump pump, clearance of vegetation, repairs to rain water goods, renewal of lightning conductor and window repairs.

When the property was retendered, viewings took place in November/December 2008. At that time the building was in a poor condition because it had suffered extensive water penetration following the theft of lead work from the roof, which occurred when the Herbert Justice Academy was in possession under the terms of an Agreement to Lease. This Agreement was subsequently terminated by the Council in July 2008 and the roof repairs immediately undertaken by the Council prior to retendering. At the time of viewing, the building was wind and water tight and was in the process of drying out. As far as the Council is aware, there has been no further deterioration.

The re-tendering process resulted in the Council accepting a proposal from Citygate Church to refurbish the property and take a 25 year lease. Having worked up its detailed proposals, the outcome of a planning application and consent for listed building consent was currently awaited. It was anticipated refurbishment work should commence in the spring.

**Supplementary question:**

Mr Hunter said he was concerned about the costs as this was important information and wanted to know what the actual costs were.

**Reply:**

The Portfolio Holder explained that he did not have that information to hand but would ask the officers to make the figures public, so far as possible.

**2) From Mr Tanner Lees:**

At the meeting of the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, in answer to a question about the building referred to as 'The Studio', in Beckenham, the Chairman explained that the company, ACAVA's proposals had been turned down because they were insufficiently socially inclusive. However he was unable to answer any supplementary questions because he stated that he had no personal knowledge of the subject. I would like, therefore, to raise the matter of the supplementary question that was asked at that meeting.

***Bearing in mind that 'The Studio' is a listed building and covenanted as a cultural facility, why were the proposals from ACAVA- a charitable organisation dedicated to the advancement of culture, with meaningful experience of restoring listed buildings- deemed to be inferior to Citygate- a fundamentalist religious sect, with no meaningful track record in community arts or conservation matters?***

**Reply:**

The covenants allow this Grade 2 Listed Building to be used for educational, community and arts purposes. ACAVA's proposal involved the subdivision of the building into artists' studios. Whilst this would benefit the artists themselves, benefit to the wider community would be limited. ACAVA's proposed budget for the project was insufficient for restoring the building to the necessary level. Citygate's proposal includes a wide range of community activities and facilities aimed at people from all walks of life, ages and abilities. It is already providing some of these activities, but has limited space. Citygate also has experience of building refurbishment having converted and restored the former post office sorting office in Beckenham to establish its church building and it was able to establish that it has sufficient funds to refurbish this building to a good standard.

**Supplementary question:**

Mr Tanner Lees asked what sort of powers the Council would have to ensure the company kept to the contract and in particular the continuing provision of a wide range of activities for all sorts of people.

**Reply:**

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council would still be the Freeholder and would have representation on the Managing Company responsible for the building.

This page is left intentionally blank