



CABINET

17:30 to 18:10

25 March 2015

Present: Councillors Waters (vice chair in the chair), Bremner, Driver, Harris and Stonard.

Also present: Councillors Galvin and Wright

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Arthur.

2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS / PETITIONS

A public question was received from Robert Stone:

“My name is Robert Stone, I live and work on Elm Hill and have had the Bear Shop business for over 25 years. Elm Hill is quoted by Norwich City Council as the jewel in the crown, having more remaining Tudor buildings than anywhere else in England including London. It attracts many tourists from all over the world who marvel at its mixture of unique shops and architecture.

So why has nothing been done for many years to keep the fabric of the buildings in good repair resulting in businesses being sold at auction and the new owners either leaving the building in disrepair waiting for property prices to rise, or not opening their premises to the public? Norwich City Council have arranged for surveys to be conducted recently to ascertain the condition of the 25 properties owned by the council on Elm Hill. The tenants have not been informed of the result of these surveys. My concern is that - found to be wanting - these properties will also be sold at auction resulting in this beautiful street becoming a residential area for the well to do.

I am convinced that, should the businesses be lost, people would not visit Elm Hill and this would surely affect tourism in Norwich.

Therefore, what responsibility does the Council have to its long term businesses and residential tenants who would lose home and livelihoods if the properties were sold?”

The deputy leader and portfolio holder for resources responded as follows:

“The council owns several properties in Elm Hill and they form an important part of the council’s commercial portfolio. The council also recognises their importance in helping to ensure that the street thrives as a visitor and tourist destination. To support investment in such properties and to provide safeguards concerning their management the council has introduced a heritage investment strategy which - amongst other things - is intended to ensure that there is sufficient budget for the repairs and maintenance of the council’s very extensive portfolio of historic buildings.

The council has disposed of Elm Hill property in the past however it’s holding remains extensive. There are no plans to dispose of any further properties at present. Property decisions are made in light of a review of the building’s purpose, heritage status, condition, income levels and availability of budget. The yet to be completed survey work which you referred to is an important element of the review process, as in providing condition information it will help confirm repair needs and investment required. The outcomes of the individual surveys will be shared with tenants once complete.

Given this – and for the properties not in our ownership – it is important to ensure that protection of Elm Hill as a visitor and tourist destination is achieved by other means. The Landlord and Tenant Act provides one level of protection as it gives rights to tenants to renew their leases and there are only limited grounds for a landlord to refuse renewal. In addition the council has planning policies to prevent change of use to residential use. Indeed not only has the council refused planning permission for change of use, we have also been successful in defending this stance at appeal. I would like to reassure Mr Stone therefore that the council treats the protection of Elm Hill with the utmost seriousness.”

Mr Stone asked the supplementary question:

“Does this mean that Norwich City Council will pay for the repairs to Elm Hill?”

The deputy leader and portfolio holder for resources replied:

“Norwich City Council is in the process of undertaking surveys and is awaiting a full report which should be ready in the summer. Once we have the report, a judgement will be made on how to deal with any repairs arising from the surveys. Please be assured that we will maintain an investment in Elm Hill.”

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015.

5. ADDITIONAL STAFF RESOURCES FOR TRANSPORT AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

The portfolio holder for environment, development and transport presented the report. He outlined an additional recommendation to ask Norwich City Council to recognise that the city council portfolio holder for transport is the agreed Department of transport cycling and walking champion for Cycle City Ambition Grant 2 and the Walk Norwich programme; and that the city council will find mechanisms for involving city councillors in the development and implementation of these schemes.

In response to a member's question, he said that some public views on the first phase of the Cycle City Ambition Grant were unexpected, therefore it had been agreed that community planning would be built into the second phase.

RESOLVED TO:

- 1) Welcome the award of a further £8.4M cycle city ambition funding to be spent in 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18;
- 2) Note the bid for funding to continue the Walk Norwich programme into a second phase and approve the addition to the capital and revenue budget for 2015-16 of the monies subject to confirmation of the funding from the Department for Transport;
- 3) Approve the mechanism outlined in this report to deliver CCAG2, Norwich Area Transport Strategy and any Walk Norwich programme; and,
- 4) Ask Norwich City Council to recognise that the city council portfolio holder for transport is the agreed Department for Transport cycling and walking champion for Cycle City Ambition Grant 2 and the Walk Norwich programme; and that the city council will find mechanisms for involving city councillors in the development and implementation of these schemes.

6. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF BUILDING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND CAPITAL IN NORWICH

The portfolio holder for neighbourhoods and community safety presented the report. The chair of the task and finish group was present and detailed the process behind the piece of work and answered members questions.

RESOLVED to note the scrutiny recommendations and agree that they are:

- 1) Considered as part of the upcoming reviews outlined in the report; and
- 2) Built into a draft multi-year work programme, working collaboratively with the relevant stakeholders, taking into account available resourcing, and brought back to cabinet for consideration.

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of item *8 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***8. REDUNDANCY COSTS**

The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods presented the report.

RESOLVED to approve the payments relating to the redundancies identified within the report.

CHAIR