

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 19 MARCH 2015

THE GOWER, GOWER STREET, ST GEORGES – UPDATE REPORT

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR SHAUN DAVIES

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The former youth building which is owned by the Council has been closed for many years. It is a Victorian brick built building occupying a prominent roadside position on Gower Street, St Georges (See plan Appendix 1). The building is important to the history and heritage of St Georges and Telford and has been used for a variety of purposes over the years.
- 1.2 It has been subject to repeated vandalism and is in a poor condition requiring complete refurbishment. A range of uses has been considered and local residents and interested individuals volunteered to work together to form the Gower St Action Group in April 2014. Working with Ward Members and Council Officers members of the group carried out a number of successful on-site clean-up and consultation events. The group is now well established and has become formally constituted as the 'Gower Heritage and Enterprise' group. Its aims include the restoration of the Gower Street building bringing it back into community use and actively engaging and consulting with the community about its potential use in the future. The building has recently received grade II listed status.
- 1.3 The 2015/16 budget includes a capital provision of £650,000 to facilitate and contribute to the refurbishment of the building for a range of community uses to benefit local residents and various clubs and organisations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the approach being taken to the refurbishment of the former Gower Street Youth Club.**
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Development, Business & Employment, in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Employment & Skills, to review and, if acceptable, approve the final business plan.**
- 2.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Development, Business & Employment, in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Employment & Skills, to implement a programme of refurbishment and governance structure when an appropriate business plan is developed and agreed.**

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	The regeneration works at Gower Street directly contribute to the following Priority Plan objectives; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Regeneration & Prosperity • Children & Young People • Active Lifestyles-Leisure & Culture • Community Protection & Cohesion
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	The residents of St Georges
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Business Plan June 2015 Complete refurbishment works December 2015	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT		The capital programme includes a one off allocation of £650k as a contribution towards the refurbishment cost of the Gower Street building. (£250k in 2015/16 and £400k in 2016/17). As detailed within this report, TWC officers will work with the Gower Street Action Group to develop a refurbishment plan for the building. Any costs over and above the capital allocation will have to be met from other funding streams and third party grants secured by the Action Group. The Action Group will also be responsible for developing a business plan which demonstrates the ongoing financial viability of the building as a community facility as the Council does not have any revenue funding available to support the ongoing running costs of the building. Finance advice and support will be provided as necessary JAC 270215
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	No legal concerns arise out of the recommendations in this report. Cabinet has power to deal with land and property management matters in these circumstances (IR19.02.15)
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	St Georges

PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

4.1 **Governance/Use/Consultation**

A robust business plan together with efficient governance structure is essential to the future sustainability of the building. It is necessary to fully engage all groups and organisations in the area to understand the community aspirations for the building. This could possibly be led by the Gower Street Action Group whose aim is to restore the building and bring it back into community use. These then need to be translated into a fully costed refurbishment plan.

4.2 In conjunction with this, a business plan setting out running costs against potential income streams needs to be developed to demonstrate the viability of the proposed uses and business model.

4.3 To support and build on the previous consultation and engagement with residents, Ward Members commissioned a local survey in summer 2014. This was sent out to 750 randomly selected households who lived in the area near to Gower Street. There were 132 responses to the survey, with over 80% of responses citing it was either very, or quite important, that the building was reopened and used as a community facility and resource. When invited to give further comments, 30 respondents commented that it was a wonderful historic building that needs renovating, with a further 14 commenting that it was a great community resource and facility.

4.4 Local Ward Members organised the first meeting of the St Georges Partnership in December 2014, membership included Ward Members, Council Officers, Police, Schools, Telford College of Arts & Technology, Parish Council, Housing providers, local businesses and community groups. Whilst it was agreed St Georges has many good things to offer residents, it also has a number of significant challenges and it was agreed that the future of the Gower Street building should remain a priority.

4.5 **Refurbishment Works**

The capital allocation will make a significant contribution to the refurbishment of the building, car park and play areas. However there are several unknowns such as the exact extent of the damage, the possible presence of hidden asbestos and the standard of finishes and use the community will want the building to be used for. Such factors will influence how far the money goes and what elements of the building works are prioritised. Certain works such as repair to the roof to ensure the building is watertight can be done immediately but the majority of the works will be agreed once the use of the building is decided.

4.6 In light of the above, it is recommended that a series of meetings are set up and facilitated via the Gower Street Action Group to agree a way forward.

4.7 There may be other funding streams such as the SITA grant monies for projects up to £60,000 which may also be accessible to top up the budget for specific elements of the refurbishment.

4.8 **Pride in Your Community**

In addition to refurbishment of the Gower Street building, improvement works are planned in St Georges as part of the Pride in the Community programme. The Timbers/Gower Street Roundabout which is about 200 metres north of the building is programmed to have improved signage and markings together with new barriers. A similar improvement scheme is proposed south of the building at the Gower Street/Church Street mini roundabout. Both are earmarked for Spring 2015.

5. **IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

None

6. **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

CB-75

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

Report prepared by Chris Goulson, Service Delivery Manager, Tel: (01952) 384302

Appendix 1 – The Gower, Gower Street

