

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: 6 AUGUST 2020

TITLE OF REPORT: THE SWAN PUBLIC HOUSE, NORTH
WARNBOROUGH

Report of: JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Cabinet member: Councillor Radley

I. THE PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to confirm that the District Council has now acquired the Swan Public House by Compulsory Purchase Order and for Cabinet to agree the next steps.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to make
- A. £30k provision from General Fund Reserves for the Joint Chief Executive to authorise the commissioning of a structural survey of the building to assess its current condition and also to prepare an appraisal study which would look at options for the future viable and beneficial use of the land.
 - B. £19k provision from General Fund Reserves to fund urgent works to be carried out to include (but not necessarily limited only to) tidying the site, the erection of hoardings across the site frontage and to erect secure fencing to the exposed side boundary, and also continuing hire cost for the current scaffolding.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Swan Public House is a Grade 2 listed building. It also lies within the North Warnborough Conservation Area and is adjacent to the Basingstoke Canal (also a Conservation Area). It has been vacant and in a poor state of repair since the serious fire in 2010. The building is in a poor condition and although there is some protection in place (erected at the expense of the District Council) it is not fully wind or weather tight. The former bottle store is also in imminent danger of total collapse as there is no structural integrity left to hold it up.
- 3.2 The Council pursued the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) on the basis that it proposed to repair the building and to convert the former public house into two cottages. This approach was supported by Historic England who confirmed to the Secretary of State that the form of the building means that such a conversion could be undertaken with little adverse impact on the architectural and historic interest of the listed building. In this sense it was agreed with the Secretary of State that such a proposal was feasible and that it would also benefit the listed building by providing it with a sustainable use.

3.3 Historic England also commented that the proposed construction of an additional dwelling alongside would have minimal impact on the setting and significance of the listed building.

4. CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the way forward. It is not however the intention at this stage to confirm the final approach and neither is it recommended at this time that the property is put on the market for disposal. What is required is budget provision to commission a full structural and feasibility study to explore the future options for the site including the opportunity to consider if refurbished the property could provide a commercial income stream to support the delivery of Council services. Once feasible options have been fully worked up a further report will be prepared for Cabinet sometime later this autumn.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The alternative option considered was simply to leave the property as it is and to put the site to market. There is no guarantee however that there would be a quick sale and there would be no certainty that the property would be fully protected in the interim or that a satisfactory future long term viable and beneficial use could be found. It would leave the property exposed to further long-term uncertainty compounded by the Council having given up the control it has worked so hard to secure over the past years.

6. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council has already spent over £120k over the past 10 years in giving interim protection for the building and pursuing the CPO. These costs are ongoing and do not include Officer time.

6.2 This project is not identified in any specific service plan, but it has been a longstanding objective of the Council to secure the property through CPO. A project team has therefore been put together. It requires a budget provision to carry out the next stage of feasibility work which includes carrying out a thorough structural survey of the building to assess its current condition. This then will influence a further appraisal study which would look at options for the future viable and beneficial use of the land. The estimated cost of these works is £30k.

6.3 In the meantime, the site must urgently be made secure. Contractors have been commissioned to tidy the site and to erect proper hoardings across the site frontage and for secure fencing to be erected to the exposed side boundary. Work is expected to start shortly but the cost is quoted to be £19k which includes the continuing hire cost for the current scaffolding.

7. ACTION

7.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to look after this listed building now that it has acquired it by CPO. It therefore needs to move swiftly to establish the condition of the asset and also to tidy the site and provide proper and secure protection. In the meantime, there is a need to bring forward an options appraisal to guide the future development of the site pursuant to the CPO objectives.

Contact Details: Daryl Phillips daryl.phillips@hart.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Joint Chief Executives Report 2 October 2014

Head of Regulatory Services Report 5 March 2016

Joint Chief Executives Report 1 December 2016