

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

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| Date of Meeting: | 28 November 2011 |
| Report of: | John Nicholson – Strategic Director, Places and Organisational Capacity |
| Subject/Title: | Crewe Heritage Centre |
| Portfolio Holder: | Cllr Jamie Macrae |

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 To consider a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor David Brickhill that in view of the Scrutiny Committee recommendation not to set up a new 125 year lease for the Crewe Heritage site being ignored. The Council has extremely grave concerns about the process which was adopted.

This report seeks to address the concerns referred to in the Notice of Motion.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to receive the report and confirm that the decisions previously taken by the Cabinet Member for Prosperity regarding the Crewe Heritage Centre were done so in an informed manner with reference to all reasonable relevant information and advice necessary to make the said decisions.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member for Prosperity is satisfied that in taking the decisions detailed in 10.0, that all relevant information and advice necessary was made available to him by the associated Officers and that all information provided by Members of the Scrutiny Committee was duly considered.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Crewe Wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Crewe Central Ward, Crewe East Ward, Crewe North Ward, Crewe South Ward, Crewe West Ward, Haslington Ward, Leighton Ward, Shavington Ward, Crewe St Barnabas, Willaston and Rope Ward, Wistaston Ward.

6.0 Policy Implications including – Carbon Reduction - Health

- 6.1 Celebrating Rail Heritage in Crewe in an important strand of 'All Change for Crewe' which is seeking to re-establish Crewe as one of the leading economic areas in the UK by 2030. The future ambitions for employment growth will be focussed on high-value manufacturing but particularly linking to the industrial heritage of the Crewe area. The future of this site and the visitor attraction in Crewe is important to retain confidence in the area and it has a strong local identity and ownership from the local community.
- 6.2 The proposed restrictive covenant will ensure that future job opportunities are increased for local young people as the site provides training opportunities to work within the rail heritage industry.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 No income is currently derived from the existing lease as the consideration is a 'peppercorn' rent. The Council will be seeking to derive an initial premium for the grant of the long lease and a nominal annual rent.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 It is considered that the most appropriate way to ensure that the future of the site is suitably protected is to offer a long leasehold interest with a relevant restrictive covenant. Through a long leasehold interest, the said covenant can be enforced with a far greater degree of control than through a freehold sale.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 In taking the relevant decisions, the Cabinet Member was fully conversant with the associated consequences.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 At a meeting held on 27 June 2011, the Cabinet Member for Prosperity considered a report to declare the site of the Crewe Heritage Centre surplus to requirements of the Council and to offer a 125 year lease for sale on the open market with a restrictive covenant which will preserve the site for the rail heritage of Crewe.

The Cabinet Member resolved the following:

"That the Cabinet Member for Prosperity agrees that the site of the Crewe Heritage Centre be declared surplus to the requirements of Cheshire East Council and that a 125 year lease be offered for sale on the open market with a restrictive covenant to preserve the site for the rail heritage of Crewe. The lease be subject to such terms and conditions as are determined by the Assets Manager, Borough Solicitor and Head of Development."

- 10.2 The Cabinet Member's decision was subsequently called in by eight Members, as provided by the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, and was considered at a meeting of the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 25 July 2011. Having considered the matter, the Scrutiny Committee decided to offer advice to the Cabinet Member.
- 10.3 At a meeting on 22 August 2011, the Cabinet Member and relevant Officers considered questions and issues raised by Members of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to Crewe Heritage Centre and the rationale of the previous decision. Having given further consideration to the matter the Cabinet Member made the statement detailed on Appendix No.1.

The Cabinet Member formally resolved the following:

That having reconsidered the matter in the light of advice received from the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet Member for Prosperity reaffirms his original decision, namely that the site of the Crewe Heritage Centre be declared surplus to the requirements of Cheshire East Council and that a 125 year lease be offered for sale on the open market with a restrictive covenant to preserve the site for the rail heritage of Crewe, the lease to be subject to such terms and conditions as are determined by the Assets Manager, Borough Solicitor and Head of Development.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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