

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting20th April 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Prioritisation of Heitage Projects

2. Record of the Decision

The Council and its partners had been preparing a number of bids for Heritage Lottery Fund. The two most advanced projects were Preston Hall Winter Gardens and Thornaby Town Hall. The regional office of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had approached Local Authorities in the North East of England, requesting projects submitted for their support to be taken from a list of heritage priorities as a result of regional budget reductions being imposed on HLF. The impact of this was that HLF was now unable to fund a greater than £250,000 contribution to any project through the main grants programme and would only be able to support one project from each Local Authority Area at any given time.

Members considered a report that outlined the programmes operated by HLF and gave a suggested way forward for the schemes.

It was explained that there were four main programmes operated by HLF, three of those, (National Grants, Your Heritage and Townscape Heritage Initiative) were not subject to any restrictions. Within those, proposals for Preston Hall and Park, Stockton Town Centre Conservation Area and small community grants were not at risk and were being encouraged by HLF. The Regional Main Grants Programme was subject to budget pressures and where prioritisation was necessary. A full list, in the proposed priority order, was provided to Members

Heritage Lottery Fund Main Grants Programme

This programme supported projects through a contribution between £50,000 and £2m. The recent changes to the HLF budgets had had a major impact with HLF recommending that they were only able to provide a maximum contribution of £250,000 with only one project being delivered by any given local authority at any one time. There were two project applications lodged with HLF for Preston Hall Winter Gardens and Thornaby Town Hall, both of which were Grade II listed.

Preston Hall Winter Gardens

As a forerunner to the main restoration work at Preston Hall and Park, this early piece of work would restore and reopen the Winter Gardens at Preston Hall. The fabric of the Winter Gardens was seriously damaged with significant concern over how the weather would affect the stability if nothing was done in the short term. If the Council were able to attract the £3-4 million in the next few years, which was expected to be needed to revitalise the Park and Hall as the Borough's most important visitor attraction, the Council must begin the process now, improving the very visible Winter Garden and showing that it valued the Park and Hall.

The proposal being put forward would see the Winter Gardens made safe and reopened for a structured programme of activities that centre on Victorian planting and horticulture. A friends group of local representatives were supporting the proposal for this popular site for weddings and other ceremonial events and detailed historic planting schedules having been worked out by horticultural specialists.

The total project cost was £308,771, made up of HLF contribution £208,957, volunteer labour £12,500, Stockton Council £87,314.

Contingency arrangements if the bid was unsuccessful could result in the Council Capital Programme being approached to fund the work in its entirety.

Thornaby Town Hall

The fabric of Thornaby Town Hall had been deteriorating since it fell into disuse in the late 1980's. The loss of the lead from the roof had been a significant contributor to this with the temporary repair work reducing the damage rather than removing the source entirely. The only use for the building was Thornaby Town Council who occupied a single room on the ground floor, but the deteriorating condition of the building may put that use at risk.

A project had been developed that would see the disused building and four extensions that made up the building group of Thornaby Town Hall being fully restored and refurbished to provide business incubator workspace for the creative industries and a community heritage centre for local activities and displays. This link between community and business support activity was in line with the recommendations being proposed by the Government backed Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.

The total project cost was £2.5m, the total HLF contribution required was £585,000.

Contingency arrangements without the HLF contribution could see a two-phased approach brought forward. This would deliver the business space in the extensions in the first phase along with securing the fabric of the original town hall through a new roof and disabled access, at a cost of approximately £1.6M that could be primarily funded from Single Programme and European Regional Development Funds. The heritage restoration work for the community heritage centre within original building would form a future second phase of work. Discussions were taking place with community organisations (Thornaby Five Lamps) for increased involvement and delivery of this approach. Thornaby Town Council had written to confirm their full support for this phased approach to securing the refurbishment of the buildings.

RESOLVED that

1. the list of projects, appended to the report, be agreed as priority order for applications for Heritage Lottery Funding subject to consultation with members and subsequent agreement with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Transport and Corporate Director, Development and Neighbourhood Services.

2. That Council Officers continue to pursue alternative funding for the remaining projects.

3. Reasons for the Decision

This recommendation has been put forward as the most effective method of securing funding for the Borough that will ensure improved access to heritage and the conservation of the borough's assets.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

None

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday, 28 April 2006.

Proper Officer
25 April 2006