

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....11th February 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Thornaby Town Hall

2. Record of the Decision

Further to Min 146/07 (Cabinet-13th March 2008) regarding the proposals for the regeneration of Thornaby Town Hall, consideration was given to the current position and circumstances with regard to the sale of the building to Python Properties.

As contained within this original decision, the Council and Python Properties wished to proceed with the development of a scheme that included Thornaby Town Council as tenants within the building. However at the moment, the Town Council were unwilling to commit to be part of the scheme and therefore, authority was sought to serve a Landlord & Tenant Act Section 25 notice on Thornaby Town Council now due to the timescales involved in both the serving of the notice/obtaining vacant possession and the need for the redevelopment to commence in order for any funding to be drawn down. It was noted that should this proposed action be approved, it was hoped that simultaneously with the period of notice, the Council and Python Properties would continue to liaise with the Town Council in the hope of securing a commitment to enter into a lease with the developer, thereby negating the need to pursue vacant possession.

Cabinet heard representations from both elected Borough and Town Council representatives of Thornaby, along with residents and spokespersons from the local heritage group, Remembering Thornaby Group (RTG), who were former tenants of the building, but who had declined the opportunity to take up permanent space in the building.

Concern was expressed at the cost of works already undertaken to the building by the Council on roof repairs and asbestos removal ; and to then dispose of the building on the open market. It was noted that the Council had considered a range of options for regeneration as a means of bringing the building back into use, prior to determining that its disposal to a private developer offered the best way forward of securing its future use.

Reference was made to the appropriateness of the consultation carried out previously by the Borough Council in December 2009. The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development advised that the results of the consultation response to the event held in Thornaby Library and on-line were available, which indicated that 73% of respondents fully supported Python's proposals for the regeneration of the building. The Town Council had carried out its own consultation which revealed that 98% of respondents wished the building to remain in public ownership.

Concern was expressed that the proposed lease terms made occupation in the building by the RTG financially prohibitive, and that there was therefore a resultant risk that there would be no place available in the future to display to the public the vast heritage collection built up by this group. It was noted Python Properties remained willing to make available meeting and display space. Reference was also made to the possibility of the group being able to take advantage of support provided by groups such as Catalyst, that would potentially provide the group access to financial assistance in order to be able to afford the proposed lease options.

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development reiterated the existing vision statement for the building, and the Director of Law and Democracy confirmed that there were no existing legal obstructions to prevent the Council from proceeding with its proposed course of action.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the authority for officers to undertake necessary legal action to ensure the satisfactory implementation of the Thornaby Town Hall Regeneration Project as provided within paragraphs 14-19 under the Legal Implications of the submitted report.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that Thornaby Town Hall Regeneration Project is implemented as agreed to a programme which maximises both private and public funding opportunities.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item as a member of Billingham Town Council, who's accommodation costs had been referred to as a comparator to the

proposed lease agreement for Thornaby Town Council.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

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

Not later than Midnight on Friday, 19th February 2010

Proper Officer  
16 February 2010