

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES 26 JANUARY 2010

THE SHERIFF'S COACH

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members' views on moving the City's Sheriff's Coach from its current location (the Livestock Centre at Matford) to a private collection and storage arrangement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of the preparatory work for the creation of the Customer Service Centre in 2005, the Sheriff's Coach was moved from its then location (in the foyer of the reception in Phase 2) to a display/storage facility at the Livestock Centre.
- 2.2 This matter was reported to both this committee in September 2005 (minute 59/05 refers) and the Executive in October 2005, where the resolution was that this arrangement be put in place for the medium term whilst alternatives were sought.
- 2.3 At that time, the Coach was used annually to lead the Lammas Fair celebrations, and was also brought out for other important Civic functions (i.e. the bicentenary commemorations of the Battle of Trafalgar).
- 2.4 However, a further decision was taken in 2007 that the costs of ensuring that the Coach was sufficiently roadworthy, as well as those of transportation and the required horses to enable it to take part in the Lammas procession did not justify the cost involved. It was, therefore, decided that it would no longer be used.
- 2.5 The purpose-built facility within which it is currently housed, was always considered to be a medium term solution, and whilst having some environmental controls, they are not sufficient to maintain the Coach in a stable condition. Its condition therefore is gradually deteriorating and will continue to do so. No suitable alternative location has been identified.
- 2.6 Whilst there are no rental costs for the current arrangement, charges of approximately £500 are incurred for the necessary electricity to run the environmental controls within the storage unit. The last time that the Coach was used, the necessary works to ensure that it was roadworthy cost approximately £350.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 An approach has been received from Ben Ford Carriages of Morchard Bishop to store the Coach at their premises (together with the lamps and liveries that go with it), and ensure that the Coach is maintained to a roadworthy condition in return for an annual fee of £500.
- 3.2 Ben Ford Carriages is a private company which is run for commercial purposes in supplying horse drawn vehicles (and the horses) for weddings, funerals and other functions, including the Lord Mayor's Show in London. Indeed, they recently supplied the horse drawn carriage used as part of the Guildhall Shopping Centre's arrival of Father Christmas parade in Exeter on 20 November 2010. They also supply vehicles for the film and television industry and own a number of horses to pull such vehicles.

- 3.3 For these purposes, they privately own a large number of different vehicles, as well as storing a carriage for the Liveries of London – this latter arrangement has been in place for over 40 years and is similar to the one now proposed for the Sheriff's Coach.
- 3.4 The Sheriff's Coach will be added to their list of vehicles available to hire. Any potential hirings will be first agreed with the City Council, as will the fee, which will then come to the Council.
- 3.5 If the Council wished to use the Coach in the future, Ben Ford Carriages would arrange for the Coach to be transported to where it was wanted, as well as providing the horses required to pull it. Additional charges would be levied (very much in keeping with those charged on the last occasion the Coach was used) but there would be no additional cost in making the Coach roadworthy, as at present.
- 3.6 The Head of Corporate Customer Services has visited the site in Morchard Bishop, and concluded that the proposed secure storage arrangements would offer a more suitable environment and would maintain the vehicle for roadworthiness.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Whilst regrettable that the Coach will no longer be stored in Exeter, nor be on display, its current location and storage arrangements are not suited to the long term retention, condition and conservation of the Coach. The agreement would allow termination should the Council identify an alternative use for the Coach.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Members' views are sought on the proposal outlined in this report.

HEAD OF CORPORATE CUSTOMER SERVICES

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None.