

REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RESOURCES

Date of Meeting: 1 July 2015

Report of: Corporate Manager Property

Title: St Nicholas Priory

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Neither.

1. What is the report about?

This report updates Scrutiny on the current situation regarding the structural condition of St Nicholas Priory; its ongoing closure; steps being taken to remedy the problems identified; and potential future uses of the building together with the income generating potential of those uses.

2. Recommendations:

- i) That the current position regarding the building be noted;
- ii) That the steps taken to address that position be endorsed, subject to the financial implications being fully identified and resourced; and
- iii) That the Museums Manager, in consultation where appropriate with the relevant Portfolio Holders and the Corporate Manager Property, develop the future uses of the building with these being presented to a future meeting of this Committee ready for implementation in good time for a potential re-opening.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

Structural problems have been identified with the vaulted ceiling voussoirs in the vault which were showing signs of spreading with associated falling mortar. Further investigation revealed that the crypt/ undercroft ceiling barrel vaults were showing evidence of plaster cracking and fall. Initial investigation determined that the vault needed propping to prevent further spread and this has been carried out. Officers, in consultation with external specialists and Historic England, are continuing to determine the best course of action for the building, balancing our duty as owners of the listed and scheduled structure; the likely financial implications of any particular course of action; and possible on-going uses of the building that mitigate these costs. This work is not yet complete so a full recommendation is not yet possible.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

To date external consultants have been engaged to assess the condition of the building and to develop potential solutions. Expenditure has been as follows:

Removal of fittings and installation of props - £1,213
Structural survey - £1,608

Further commitments have been made as follows:

Assessment of historic plaster to the crypt - £300
Laser survey and further structural survey work - £1,200

These sums have been met from existing budgets. However, clearly substantive works will require additional capital funding which is not provided for in the 2015/16 capital programme. A request for funding may need to be submitted to Executive and Council in due course, either as emergency funding or as an element of the 2016/17 capital programme.

Once a full costing has been secured a recommendation will be made to carry out our duties as owner of a scheduled and listed building. A business case will also be drawn up to consider support for any additional works necessary to facilitate longer term sustainable uses for the building. Some initial work has been done on this by museum staff but this will need to be worked up as a full business case before presentation to Members.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

The contents of the report are noted. Any further requests for funding will be included in the financial plans of the Council if approved.

6. What are the legal aspects?

The Council's responsibility to maintain its historic building assets is of primary importance, particularly in relation to scheduled/listed buildings. The risk of failure to carry out the proposed works is set out at paragraph 10 below.

The input of Legal Services will be required in settling contractual terms in relation to any proposed works.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This report raises no issues of concern for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

See report details above

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

Nothing at this stage

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

The Council will be exposed to enforcement and reputational damage should it fail in its duty to act as a responsible steward of the scheduled/ listed building. Our recommendation will be made in full recognition of this obligation.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

None

12. Are there any other options?

In light of our duties set out above no alternative courses of action would seem to present themselves.

Michael Carson
Corporate Manager Property
June 2015

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:-
None

Contact for enquires: Sharon Sissons
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
01392 265275