

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject: POUNDS HOUSE
Committee: Compton and Peverell Area Committee
Date: 16th November 2009
Cabinet Member: Finance, People Property & Governance - Councillor Bowyer
CMT Member: Director for Corporate Support
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Ref:
Part: 1

Executive Summary:

The report updates Committee on the current and proposed future uses for Pounds House within Central Park.

Corporate Plan 2009-2012:

Providing better value for money in managing its assets

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

Proposed future works will be contained within existing budgets

Other Implications: e.g. Section 17 Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management, Equalities Impact Assessment, etc.

Proposed future use will provide a permanent appropriate use for the building which will reduce community safety and health & safety risks associated with other alternative uses.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

The area committee is recommended to note the proposed actions to safeguard the long term future and condition of the building.

The committee is also encouraged to consider the future use of the building and offer any comments and in particular the involvement of the local community in developing the proposals.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

Do nothing – the council would be failing in its statutory duty as owner of the listed building to preserve it's status by providing a long term suitable use for the building.

Background papers:

Attached briefing paper

Sign off: comment must be sought from those whose area of responsibility may be affected by the decision, as follows (insert initials of Finance and Legal reps, and of Heads of HR, AM, IT and Strat. Proc.):

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Pounds House is a Grade II listed 19th Century country house which was bequeathed to Plymouth City Council.

2.0 Existing condition and current use

- 2.1 The building was fully refurbished following a major fire approximately 20 years ago. The outside of the building was redecorated in 2005 along with the repairs to the boundary wall and fountain.
- 2.2 Until last year the ground floor of the building was used for catering and other functions including weddings. The first floor was used as office space until the end of 2007. Both areas were commercially let by the city Council to external organisations.
- 2.3 Following the vacation of the building by the external organisations, the council was concerned that by leaving the building vacant this would attract vandalism and potential anti social behaviour. To alleviate this immediate problem the ground floor of the building has been used by the team developing the Life Centre project. The venue has been successfully used for this purpose as a design office and has been used for public and project meetings and presentations during the planning process.

3.0 Future use of the building.

- 3.1 Due to the success of the building to date in supporting the Life Centre project it is intended that the ground floor continue to be used by the project team during the construction phase. It will continue to host design team and client meetings and be a base for the project management team until completion of the project at the end of 2011.
- 3.2 The first floor will be used as office accommodation for services from within the council. Currently several potential users are considering utilising the available office space.
- 3.3 The Council has been considering the longer term use of the building since it became vacant last year. Given the nature and location of the building it is important to find an appropriate long term use that will safeguard the future of the building. Following several options being considered the preferred option is for the Register Office to be relocated from its current base in Lockyer Street. This will give potential advantages to the service which is currently compromised by the size and layout of its current location given the increased competition from hotels which are now able to hold ceremonies. It will also enable the service to co-locate with other complimentary functions, like the coroner and bereavement services, which it cannot do from its current base
- 3.4 Some minor internal alteration and refurbishment work would be required, together with some external demolition of redundant stores which would enhance current parking provision, to bring the accommodation up to the appropriate standard. The intention would be to sell off the Locker Street site, which is not required to be retained as part of the Hoe Conservation plan, and use part of the receipt from that site to fund the works required at Pounds House. However given the current state of the property market it is prudent to hold off with the plans for the Lockyer Street site until better value could be obtained, hence the interim use of the building as described in sections 3.1 and 3.2. Plans are currently being developed for the buildings future use as the Register Office to enable an application for listed building consent to be submitted. This will enable the scheme to commence once the building is about to become available and market conditions support the proposal.