

Key Decision Required:	N	In the Forward Plan:	N
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PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

24 APRIL 2020

A.1 *Martello Towers Day event feedback and next steps*

(Report prepared by *Layla Davey*)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- To feed back the results of the consultation event held in July 2019, and;
- To consider a direction of travel in terms of future use of Martello Towers D and E.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council owns three Martello Towers on the West Seafront of Clacton on Sea: Towers D, E and F. All of the towers are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Towers D and E are on the Heritage at Risk Register and this report relates principally to them.

Officers and Historic England held a Martello Towers Day in July 2019 open to both professionals and the general public. The event was well received and a number of comments and suggestions were made on the day and in the weeks afterwards. These are summarised in the Current Position section of the report and are available in full for member consideration if required.

This report seeks to establish a direction to follow in terms of the regeneration of these Ancient Monuments into a viable and sustainable use.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Portfolio Holder:

- Notes the suggestions made by attendees at the event and considers the options appraisal.**
- Requests that officers develop proposals for the Towers, including seeking grant funds and technical assistance from regulatory bodies, that allow them to be conserved and converted by the Council if grant funding is available or;**
- if no grant funding is secured within a year, marketed with a long lease for an appropriate conversion and use that contributes to the vitality of the seafront with a bias towards financial viability in terms of Tower D and a bias towards a financially sustainable community dimension in terms of Tower E.**

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Successful and sustainable conversion and use of the towers will deliver on the following emergent Council priorities:

- Public spaces to be proud of
- Promote Tendring's tourism, cultural and heritage offers
- Maximise our coastal and seafront opportunities
- Use assets to support priorities

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK**Finance and other resources**

Grant and internal funding for the short term works and tenders and scheduled ancient monument consent have been secured by officers and approved by the Leader (Acting for the Portfolio Holder because of potential conflict of interest). These works can be progressed following Listed Building Consent and detailed approvals.

The cost of longer-term works and any conversions are likely to cost many hundreds of thousands of pounds. It may be that grant assistance is available or that the towers can be let on terms that facilitate private investment in their future. This will be subject to further investigation and decision.

Risk

- The Condition of the towers and their disuse are potential reputational risks to the Council.
- Ongoing deterioration of the structures risks increasing long-term costs and financial risk to the Council.
- Further grant assistance has the risk of being unsuccessful.
- Selling/leasing the Towers with the renovation work outstanding, carries the risk that work will not be carried out by appropriate contractors, or at all.
- Long term Council or community use of the buildings carries risk of revenue unsustainability.

LEGAL

In coming to decisions in relation to management of assets, the Council must act in accordance with its statutory duties and responsibilities. Under case law following Section 120 of Local Government Act 1972, the Council is obliged to ensure that the management of its assets are for the benefit of the district.

Future final decisions on uses or disposals will have legal implications to be considered at the time.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.

Community engagement was carried out at the event held. The sustainable use of the towers has potential to improve the local environment and generate positive effects related to a range of issues.

Ward

St James

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**BACKGROUND**

Martello Towers D, E and F are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and are owned by TDC.

- Tower D has been vacant and disused for many years.
- Tower E has a short time remaining under a lease to the local scout group but has been unused for a number of years.
- Tower F is let to a private tenant and has been a café and a small zoo but is presently unused. A planning application for change of use to an events venue has recently been made.

- Tower D is in a broadly sound condition but isolated.
- Tower E is in a severely decayed state with dangerous falling render and severely damaged roof externally, decayed timber floors, water ingress, cracking and fallen material.
- The principal parts of Tower F are in broadly sound condition. TDC has a duty to ensure the towers are conserved but also used in a sustainable manner.

There has been interest and disappointment expressed from the general public regarding the current condition of the Martello Towers.

As scheduled Ancient Monuments, any work to the towers is subject to a rigorous approval process by Historic England. Historic England are keen to ensure that the specific issues with the towers are clearly and correctly understood before significant works are carried out and that a whole package of measures including responsible conversion, and a financially sustainable end use is established.

In 2014, TDC commissioned an historic buildings specialist to report on the condition of Tower E.

In 2018, Historic England and TDC commissioned a specialist architect to report on the condition of towers D and E and to propose options for future uses that could be financially sustainable in the future. A range of options from residential to studio uses was proposed.

The reports and advice from the specialists formed a key plank of the Martello Towers day that was organised by TDC and supported by Historic England.

CURRENT POSITION

Martello Towers Day was developed to share knowledge and gain all public/professional suggestions for the Towers. To summarise these broadly:

Community and members

1. The Community interest focusses most on Tower E.
2. There is a sense of frustration that no action to restore the buildings has taken place.
3. There is frustration that the options put forward by the architects do not include community uses.
4. There was concern voiced by members that a local businessman who has expressed interest in Tower E has not been sold the building.
5. A number of historically sensitive and community related proposed uses were suggested. Officers have compiled all of the community suggestions into a pack which is available to members if required.

Specialists, Historic England and the Council's officers:

1. Tower E is suffering from serious issues caused by the ingress of water and the detailed nature of this needs to be scientifically investigated to ensure that remedial measures resolve the internal damage rather than worsen it.
2. External render on Tower E is dangerous and needs to be removed directly.
3. The towers need to be converted into a financially sustainable future use so that ongoing repairs and maintenance can be appropriately funded.
4. Community and public uses require full accessibility and the measures necessary to achieve that are more intrusive and detrimental to the character of the forts: the fundamental of the original design was to try to make them inaccessible.

In order to consider the divergent views and options officers have prepared an options appraisal document attached as appendix B.

Additionally, since the event:

- Historic England accepted the urgent requirement of render removal and have now authorised these works under Health and Safety Class Consent (Class Consent 5).
- Officers submitted an expression of interest to apply for a substantial grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to support a project that would include conservation and conversion of both towers and a range of local improvements and initiatives. Unfortunately, this bid was unsuccessful.
- The historic buildings specialist has sought tenders and additional Scheduled Ancient Monument consent for a package of work at Tower E that will include waterproofing and provision of safe access to allow the completion of tests and monitoring leading to an agreed way to stabilise the structure.
- Officers have secured a significant grant from Historic England to facilitate this work and the Leader has authorised acceptance of the grant and the lowest tender for the work. Work can begin once some procedural issues have been resolved.

FURTHER HEADINGS RELEVANT TO THE REPORT

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

Condition and future use options reports detailed in the Background section
Pack of full consultation responses

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Location Plan
Appendix B: Options Appraisal