

Urgent Works at Woodshutts Farmhouse, Second Avenue, Kidsgrove

Purpose of the Report

To request, as an item of Urgent Business, approval for the use of the Historic Buildings Grant fund to assist with the preparation of a schedule of work which could form the basis of an Urgent Works Notice at Woodshutts Farmhouse, Kidsgrove, and help to fund the execution of such works.

The farmhouse is a Listed Building on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register.

The urgency of this matter relates to the importance of immediately taking steps to stabilise this building following a recent fire, and before the onset of winter.

Recommendations

That Members agree to the use of the Historic Buildings Grant fund to

- (1) Commission (and pay for) a report for a specification of works to keep the building safe from collapse and weatherproofing following a recent fire which could then form the basis for an Urgent Works Notice if the Executive Director (Regeneration and Development) considers such Notice should be served, and
- (2) to provide financial assistance of up to £2,000 to the owner to undertake such works, and
- (3) to execute the works referred to in that Notice if the owner does not do so.

Reasons

To conserve the Borough's important heritage assets as well as ensuring their survival for the enjoyment of future generations.

1.0 Context and Background

- 1.1 In June 2012 the Planning Committee agreed in principle that the Council's Historic Building Grants could be used to support the serving of an Urgent Works Notice or a Repairs Notice for Listed Buildings.
- 1.2 Following this decision, the Committee agreed at its meeting on the 29th October to support the serving of an Urgent Works Notice for the conservatory at Madeley Manor Care and a conservation architect was appointed to draw up a schedule of works to weatherproof the structure. The building was allocated £4,000 and so far only £600 has had to be used to pay the architect. This is because the owners of the Care Home carried out the necessary works to keep the building weatherproof. The conservatory is still secure and a recently re-installed temporary roof covering is place. The Care Home is currently in Administration and the chosen Administrators have control for a relatively extended time period and are aware of the requirement to deal with the Urgent Works and the responsibilities they have for the building.
- 1.3 Woodshutts Farmhouse is also on the Council's Building at Risk Register and there is a listed building consent to carry out refurbishment and extension of the building. The owner has been slowly undertaking work to repair the roof and until recently the building had a new roof and was weatherproof

2.0 Current position and next steps

- 2.1 There was a severe fire at Woodshutts Farmhouse in October 2015 which has destroyed all of the new roof structure on the gable end and some of the timber framed outrigger. There is now a need to ensure that whilst the owner takes stock of his position that the building is appropriately protected and supported especially with the onset of winter.
- 2.2 The Council is committed to working with owners to secure lasting repairs and productive re-use of the Buildings at Risk within the Borough.
- 2.3 Where a Listed Building is not fully occupied, notice can be served under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Urgent Works Notice). This enables the Local Authority to undertake urgent works to parts of the property that are not in use. Work under this type of Notice can only ensure that the structure is weatherproof, safe from collapse and secure from or theft. The Notice describes the proposed works and gives a minimum of seven days written warning of the intention to carry out these works. The owner can respond by carrying out the works. If the Authority has to undertake the works themselves the costs can be recovered from the owner.

3.0 The proposal

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Council engages a specialist structural engineer to specify the minimum works to prevent any further deterioration or collapse of the building as a first stage which will then be used to engage a contractor to carry out the work if the owner does not decide to do the works himself. The decision on whether to use the power under Section 54 is one that is delegated to the Executive Director (Regeneration and Development). The work is likely to include some propping, security measures and a temporary roof covering which could be tarpaulin, but until the survey is undertaken, the cost of these works are not known. The cost of the specialist engineer will be around £1,400. Once the report for the work is specified by the Structural Engineer, it will then be possible to get some further quotations to carry out the work.
- 3.2 It is therefore proposed that the £3,400 from the HBG Fund be reallocated from the Conservatory at Madeley Manor to fund the cost of the Structural Engineers report at Woodshutts Farmhouse and then any funds which are left from that be offered to the owner towards the cost of the actual work - to make the building safe from collapse and weatherproof. If the owner does not carry out the work within a specified time period, the Council will then draw up an Urgent Works Notice and carry out the works itself and claim the costs back from the owner using the Fund as necessary. It is important to note that a Notice to carry out urgent works cannot ensure the full restoration of a building or structure but it can prevent short term deterioration.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The Council can target its limited grant aid funds towards the Buildings at Risk. The work will be subject to the usual conditions which require 2 quotations for each stage of the work.
- 4.2 It should also be noted that the funding which was originally allocated to deal with Urgent Works at Madeley Manor Care Home will now be reallocated to deal with Woodshutts Farmhouse which has a greater need at this time than the conservatory at Madeley given that the Administrators are accepting the responsibility for the building at present.
- 4.3 The views of the Chairman of the Conservation Advisory Working Party are being sought, in the absence of an available meeting of that Working Party, and will be reported to the Committee.

