SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of Conservation Working Party

Date: Monday, 8th September, 2014
Place: Civic Centre, Civic Suite, Committee Room 4

Present:
Councillor Assenheim (Chairman)
Councillors Chalk, Crystall, Jarvis and Ware-Lane
Mrs R Arscott (Co-opted member), Mr A Atkinson (Co-opted Member), Mrs M Buckey (Co-opted member), Mr R Coombs (Co-opted member), Mr M V Dedman (Co-opted member) and *Ms L Smith (Co-opted member)

*Substitute

In Attendance: Councillor Mulroney, Mr D Hermitage, Ms A Greenwood, Ms A Roberts and Mr R Harris.

Start/End Time: 18.00/19.30

**** Part I

1 Apologies and substitutions.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Evans, Adam Jones and Waterworth (no substitutes).

Apologies were also received from Ms S Hawkins (substitute: Ms L Smith).

2 Declarations of interest.

Members declared the following interests:

(a) Councillor Crystall - All agenda items - non-pecuniary interest - Member of Leigh Society;

(b) Councillor Mulroney - all agenda items - non-pecuniary interest - Member of Leigh Town Council and Leigh Society;

(c) Mrs M Buckey - Agenda Item 8 (Alexandra Yacht Club) - non-pecuniary interest - former member of the yacht club.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 22nd January, 2014

During consideration of the Minutes two matters were raised in respect to the Terms of Reference of the Working Party and an undertaking given at the last meeting to put the Conservation Working Party minutes on the conservation part of the Council's website.

The officers would recirculate the Terms of Reference and add the minutes to the Council's website.

Resolved:

That, subject to the above points being implemented, the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 22nd January 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 Milton Conservation Area Appraisal

The Working Party considered a report of the Corporate Director for Place which presented the final version of the Milton Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

Resolved:
1. That the contents and proposed amendments arising from the public consultation, be noted.

2. That Cabinet be recommended to adopt the amended Milton Conservation Character Appraisal.

3. That the officers involved in the preparation of the Milton Conservation Area appraisal be thanked for their hard work.

5 Update on Royal Terrace

The Working Party received an update on the current position regarding the Royal Terrace, set out below:

13 Royal Terrace
• Officers reported that they had been informed by the owners that the damage to the roof of this property had been repaired.
• Officers are aware that the building is currently vacant but it was confirmed that Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted for the subdivision of the building to create a self contained flat in the basement. This permission has not been implemented yet but does not expire until April 2015 so it may still be the owner’s intention to renovate the building.
• Officers will continue to monitor the situation.

15 Royal Terrace
• Officers reported that an exterior survey of 15 Royal Terrace had been undertaken and this had raised issues both with regard to public health and safety, arising from the potential falling debris, and general concerns with regard to the deterioration of the listed building. Although contact had been made with the owner on these issues a number of times no action has been forthcoming and so advice is currently being sought from the Council’s Legal Department on which is the best route open to the Council to pursue more formal action against the owner of this property.
• Officers also reported that the building was has been placed on the ‘Essex Heritage at Risk’ buildings at risk’ register and that the building had recently been put on the market which offered hope that a new owner who wishes to renovate the property may come forward.
• Officers will continue to monitor the situation;
• Officers were are aware of the residents and Councillors concerns regarding the safety of the building;

The Working Party's attention was drawn to the English Heritage publication, ‘Stopping the Rot’, which aims to support local planning authorities to use the statutory powers at their disposal (e.g. S.215 Notices, Urgent Works Notices, Repairs Notice and Compulsory Purchase Orders) to preserve and keep historic buildings in good repair.

There were a number of historic buildings in the borough which require meaningful actions to protect and preserve them. The Milton Conservation Group felt that the Council was not putting enough impetus to use its statutory powers to protect and preserve the borough's historic buildings.

Officers commented that any formal action under planning enforcement legislation would need prior agreement at Development Control Committee and that this was now being considered for 15 Royal Terrace.

Resolved:

1. That the update on the 13 and 15 Royal Terrace be noted.

2. That the officers be requested to look into the options for more formal action against the owner of 15 Royal Terrace to ensure that public health and safety concerns are remedied and measures are taken to prevent deterioration of the listed building.
6  Leas Shelter - Planning Update

The Working Party received an update on the current position regarding the Leas Shelter, set out below:

- The planning application for change of use of the shelter to a café/restaurant had been granted;
- A further application had been received to build a small ice cream kiosk on the roof-top terrace, however, the application is currently invalid;
- Once the application has been validated a statutory consultation period would take place with adjacent premises being individually notified and site notices put on display in the general area to inform the public of the application and invite comments. The decision on this application would be made under delegated powers, unless the application is called into Development Control Committee by Members;

Resolved:

That the planning update on the Leas Shelter be noted.

7  Heritage Asset Condition Management

The Working Party received an update in respect to the following matters:

(a) Park Road Methodist Church

- This was a Grade II listed building in a poor deteriorating condition;
- Officers confirmed that an exterior survey of the building had been undertaken and that they have been in discussions with the owners for some time regarding the condition of the building.
- Officers are pleased to report that the owner has recently confirmed that the necessary repairs to the building would be carried out in the near future;
- The building has been added to the ‘Essex Heritage at Risk’ register;

(b) Cliff Gardens

A number of photographs highlighting areas of disrepair in Cliff Gardens were presented by the Milton Society. There were areas with superficial damage which could easily be rectified and it was requested that the Council gives a higher priority to this area in its repairs and maintenance schedule. It was recognised that some areas would require significant reparation and would not be easily resolved.

The officers advised that the Council's Parks Department were aware of the problems in Cliff Gardens and that repair works were needed. However, there were stability concerns and cost implications and a number of risks and safety issues for staff which were hampering progress in this area.

The Chairman agreed to liaise with the Executive Councillor for Enterprise, Tourism and the Environment, Corporate Director for Place and the Head of Culture to look at what repairs could be undertaken in the Cliff Gardens.

Reference was made to gardens in Scarborough and Felixstowe which had been registered with English Heritage under Grade II listing and it was suggested that the Council considers applying English Heritage to have the Cliff Garden listed.

(c) Beecroft

- Officers informed the Working Party that the Beecroft was not owned by the Council but is owned by the Beecroft Trust, although the Council is a trustee;
- It was confirmed that there were currently no planning applications for this site but this was not unexpected as it had only recently been vacated;
• Officers are aware that building surveys are being undertaken into the structural stability of the building but these have not yet been passed to the Planning Section;
• The Beecroft Trust will be looking at the options for the building;

Officers confirmed that the building was considered to make a positive contribution to the historic character of Shorefields Conservation Area. The Working Party emphasised that the Beecroft was a focal point within the conservation area.

The Chairman will liaise with the Executive Councillor for Enterprise, Tourism and the Environment, Corporate Director for Place and the Head of Culture and an update report would be provided to a future meeting of the Working Party.

Resolved:

1. That the updates provided in respect of (a) to (c) above be noted.
2. That an update on Cliff Gardens be provided to a future meeting of the Working Party.
3. That a report on the Beecroft be provided to a future meeting of the Working Party.

8 Alexandra Yacht Club

The Working Party received an update on the current position with the Alexandra Yacht Club, as set out below:

• The building had been surveyed earlier this year and there was serious structural damage due to cliff slippage;
• The building was closed and the Yacht Club relocated to other premises;
• There was significant risk to public safety and it had been recommended for demolition;
• Following recommendation for demolition the building had been subject to a significant fire;
• The original proposal for landscaping open space was still the proposed intention for the site;

The Working Party was informed that there were cremated remains within the site which will need to be disposed of within regulations. The officers would advise the Council’s Asset Management Team regarding the cremated remains.

Resolved:

That the update on the Alexandra Yacht Club be noted.

9 Design and Townscape Guide and General Policy Update

The Working Party received an update on the Design & Townscape Guide and other general planning policies.

Officers advised that the Design and Townscape Guide was in the process of being updated and any comments on the document were welcomed and should be sent/email directly to officers at this stage.

Resolved:

That the update on the Design and Townscape Guide and other policies be noted.

10 Buildings Materials around Conservation Areas

The Working Party received an overview of how planning policies were used to assess planning applications for development which is adjacent to conservation areas. The proposed materials are a key consideration in these applications and the policies seek to ensure that any proposed materials are complementary to the surrounding area including the adjacent conservation area.
Resolved:

That the overview of planning policies in respect to buildings adjacent to conservation areas be noted.

11 Date and time of next meeting

Monday 19th January 2015 at 6.00pm.