

MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP

5 JANUARY 2016

Present: Councillor R Martins (Chair)
Councillors K Collett, M Haley, A Joynes and L Topping

Also present: Councillor J Connal

Officers: Head of Regeneration and Development
Urban Design and Conservation Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

15 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were none.

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2015 were submitted and signed.

17 COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

The Task Group reviewed the comparative study of data regarding the management of conservation areas in Watford Borough, Dacorum, St Albans City and District and Three Rivers District Councils.

Although there was some variation in the size and scope of the various Councils, the comparative exercise highlighted the different approaches in neighbouring authorities as well as best practice.

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- there was scope to examine Watford Borough Council's Article 4 Directions, particularly in regard to new technologies. Following best practice guidance, the Council's approach was to specify classes of development rather than to pursue full scale removal of development rights. Any new provisions would be reviewed in this context and take into account advice from Historic England (replacing English Heritage) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Watford Borough Council had a relatively favourable resource allocation in its conservation expertise, despite previous restructuring. Additional expertise could be brought in on an ad hoc basis as the need arise
- Watford Borough Council had a robust toolkit of conservation documents in place, which was vital to back up its position in the event of an appeal. It was noted that much of the detailed work had been achieved when a full time conservation officer had been in place.

18 **SHOPFRONTS**

The Task Group revisited the Shopfront Guidance to establish whether any changes should be made to the document.

Following a brief discussion, there were no immediate proposals for change.

The Chair invited Task Group members to submit any late comments to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer for consideration.

19 **PREPARATION FOR 26 JANUARY 2016 DROP-IN SESSION**

During discussions on arrangements for the public drop-in session on Tuesday 26 January, the following points were agreed:

- the drop-in session would run from 5.30 pm until 7.30 pm, although discussions would continue if members of the public remained
- social media, the Council's website, leafleting to houses in the conservation areas, poster distribution around the town, and the Watford Observer would all be used to promote the drop-in session
- further public feedback would be sought using Survey Monkey, with a link on the Council's website. This would contain a slightly reworded survey to make the questions more self-explanatory
- all members would be asked to contact their residents associations, interested groups and individuals etc, to advertise the drop-in event and encourage attendance and questionnaire responses. To assist in this, posters would be distributed to Councillors to place in local shops and community spaces.

20 **COUNCILLOR SURVEY**

The following points were agreed on the Councillor Survey:

- it should be sent to all Councillors

- the survey should be altered slightly to reflect the fact that some Councillors would not either live in or represent a ward containing a conservation area
- question 7 should be reworded to encourage the development of a database of individuals who could be approached in regard to conservation issues.

21

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Tuesday 26 January (5.30pm to 7.30pm)
- Tuesday 2 February (to begin at 6.00pm)

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 7.45 pm