

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 7 June 2021

Report Title: Parking Spaces at Winding Street

Report By: Peter Grace, Chief Finance Officer

Key Decision: N

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To consider a request from the proposed new owners of the Isabel Blackman Centre (IBC) to have exclusive use of the parking spaces in Winding Street.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. Cabinet recommend to full Council that terms be agreed to lease the parking spaces to the new owners of the IBC at less than Market Rent (Nil rent).**

Reasons for Recommendations

Use of the five parking spaces is considered essential by IBC for the practical operation of the centre and while letting at less than Market Value is a financial loss to the Council this is outweighed by the benefit to the Community as a whole.

Introduction

1. This report updates on developments surrounding the IBC and considers future use of parking spaces owned by Hastings Borough Council (HBC). A request has been made that HBC make these spaces available without charge to support the retention and operation of this important building and enable services for older people and the wider community.
2. Decisions to grant leases, or concessions, at below market rent are, given the Council's challenging financial position, required to be made by full Council.

Background

3. For many years the IBC has been a day-centre resource for older people and their carers and a bookable community facility for meetings and activities in the Old Town. It is one of relatively few accessible community venues in the Old Town. The building (at the time of producing the draft report) is in the ownership of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) who, as a result of financial challenges faced by the authority and following a Day Care Services review deemed the building to be surplus to requirements and following a Cabinet decision listed it for disposal. This proposal was the case of considerable local concern and a series of stakeholder meetings were convened by Hastings Voluntary Action to discuss possible options.
4. From this process, a consortium of voluntary and community organisations (currently Age UK East Sussex, Hastings Voluntary Action, Hastings and St Leonards Seniors Forum, and the Hastings Old Town Residents Association) have been working for some time on a campaign to ensure that this important Old Town building remained a local asset of lasting social value. An initial application was made to register the building with HBC as an Asset of Community Value whilst a fundraising campaign was launched. As this gathered pace ESCC voluntarily extended the moratorium period to give every chance that the fundraising target could be achieved. As a result of an enormous community effort a total of £450,000 has been pledged via local fundraising, donations, charitable trusts and the sale of a painting by Quentin Blake.
5. For the local community this represents a considerable moment – achieved during the COVID 19 crisis and for ESCC a double benefit is achieved in the form of a capital receipt and the centre continuing to offer services. A new charity IBC – in Perpetuity (IBC in perp) has been formed to hold and manage the building. Contracts have been exchanged and the completion of the sale is anticipated over the next period.
6. Within the centre a 2-bedroom flat is available but has been unused for some years. IBC in perp are in discussion within a Housing Provider to partner in the refurbishment of the property so that this can be brought back into use to both meet local housing needs and make a revenue contribution towards the day to day costs of the centre's activities.

Parking and Garden Area

7. When the IBC was owned by ESCC an agreement was in place between them and HBC to lease the parking spaces and garden area (shown edged black on the plan) at a Market Rent (was £5,000 in 2017). These areas were made available free of charge by ESCC to the organisation responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Centre. IBC in perp assumed that that this would continue when they became owners of the IBC.

8. The Trustees of IBC in perp consider that use of the parking spaces is essential to the future operation of the Centre and have made the following points to demonstrate this:
 - a. To access the IBC, particularly for older people with disabilities or mobility issues, off road parking is needed.
 - b. It will enable mini-bus access, it is likely that there will be 2 minibus pickup and drop offs per day, and an adequate turning space for larger vehicles.
 - c. Alternative arrangements have been found to cause disruption to other road users.
 - d. Winding Street also serves 2 busy commercial properties Trade Paints (with 50 vehicles visiting per day) and Judges Bakery (with the need to load and unload delivery vans). If the road becomes congested there is an impact on the A259 which IBC in perp are keen to minimise.

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness

9. The provision of the services from this building will provide considerable support to many members of the community.

Financial Implications

10. Should the Council agree to lease these parking spaces, the monies spent on refurbishment (removal of posts, resurfacing, lining) will not be recovered. There will also be an ongoing loss of income of **£5,000 per annum** (at 2017 prices – previously paid by ESCC) and the potential income from these spaces could be higher.
11. An undertaking by the IBC to maintain the spaces, not to sublet them and return them if not used may help minimise future costs and loss of income.

Conclusion

12. IBC in perp have made a proposal to take a lease of the parking spaces for a peppercorn (less than Market Rent) but they have committed they will undertake ongoing maintenance as part of their wider management of the site.
13. While the proposal will result in a loss of income to HBC it may be considered that the overall benefits justify this.

Timetable of Next Steps

14. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Consideration by Full Council	Decision made	June/July 2021	Amy Terry
Agree Heads of	Legal instructed	June 2021	Amy Terry

Terms			
IBC in perp start using the spaces	Lease completed	TBC	Legal/Amy Terry

Wards Affected

Old Hastings

Policy Implications

Have you used relevant project tools?: Y/~~N~~

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y/ N
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Y /N
Risk Management	Y /N
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	Y /N
Economic/Financial Implications	Y/ N
Human Rights Act	Y /N
Organisational Consequences	Y /N
Local People's Views	Y/ N
Anti-Poverty	Y /N
Legal	Y /N

Additional Information

Plan.

Officer to Contact

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