

**ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL:  
NOTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF  
THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION  
& INVESTMENT BOARD**

**22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**

**Attending:** Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)  
Cllr. Bartlett  
Cllr. Clokie  
Cllr. Ovenden  
Cllr. Shorter

Chief Executive  
Director of Finance & Economy  
Head of Corporate Property & Projects  
Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager  
Estates and Facilities Manager  
Economic Development Manager  
Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure  
Head of Finance and IT  
Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications  
Member Services & Ombudsman Liaison Officer

	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>1. Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Cllr. Ovenden made a Voluntary Announcement as he owned a site opposite the Carlton Road premises.</p>	
<p><b>2. Notes of the Previous Meeting</b></p> <p>The Notes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 were agreed and confirmed as a correct record.</p>	
<p><b>3. Sale of Unit 15 Carlton Road</b></p> <p>The Estates and Facilities Manager introduced this item and explained that the figure provided in a previous report was erroneous. Members discussed the proposed new sale price and the details of cost per square foot. Members agreed the recommendation to sell the unit and freehold interest at the revised price.</p>	

<p><b>4. Tenanted Estate Rental Support</b></p> <p>The Estates and Facilities Manager introduced this item and expanded on the individual locations covered in the report and the recommendations. Members discussed each location in turn and agreed the following:</p> <p>Recommendation 1 – agreed.  Recommendation 2 – agreed, but remove the words ‘upward only’ from the recommendation. <b>DK</b>  Recommendation 3 – further information awaited – officers to report back to a future meeting. <b>DK</b>  Recommendation 4 – a small rent concession could be offered, but more dialogue was needed with tenants with a view to them downsizing to one unit. <b>DK</b>  Recommendation 5 – agreed.  Recommendation 6 – agreed.  Recommendation 7 – further discussions required before a decision could be taken.  Recommendation 8 – Members expressed concern at the lack of communication from the tenant. Officers to continue to attempt dialogue with the tenants. To be discussed further at a future meeting. <b>DK</b>  Recommendation 9 – agreed.  Recommendation 10 – agreed.  Recommendation 11 – agreed.  Recommendation 12 – officers to explore benchmarking other venues. <b>DK</b>  Recommendation 13 – agreed.</p> <p>The Estates and Facilities Manager advised that further requests from tenants for support could be forthcoming, and he suggested that he report them to future meetings. The Chairman said Members would welcome being kept up to date on this issue.</p>	
<p><b>5. Disposal of Conningbrook properties</b></p> <p>The Commercial Development &amp; Regeneration Manager introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. The Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure explained the situation regarding the pub offering and the potential bigger vision for the park. She noted that the properties were in a prime location and could impact on future plans for the site. Members were in agreement that it was important to retain the properties in Council ownership until longer term plans for the park were better understood.</p> <p>It was also agreed that the proposed investment in the heating systems in the properties was a sensible suggestion and the funding was approved.</p>	

<p><b>6. Investment in Newtown Works</b></p> <p>The Director of Finance and Economy introduced this item. He explained that there were proposed changes to the scheme and a new planning application would be forthcoming. He clarified that Board Members were being invited to have a scoping discussion on the options and indicate their views on the changes to the scheme. Members preferred the option to secure the freehold interest for the Council, but expressed concerns about the level of borrowing. A Member said more data was needed to make a proper decision. Another Member noted that it was unclear whether there was still a market for studios of this nature and that further research was needed to clarify this point. The Director of Finance and Economy assured Members that the operational borrowing limit was a Member-led decision, which was taken through full Council. He suggested that external expertise should be sought to appraise the current market for this kind of product. Members agreed, and requested that officers return to a future meeting with greater details.</p>	<p><b>TK/BL</b></p>
<p><b>7. Any Other Business</b></p> <p>The Commercial Development &amp; Regeneration Manager advised Members that discussions with the Parish Council had been held regarding the future of Woodchurch Windmill. The Parish Council had indicated that they would be interested in taking over the care of the Windmill, provided that it was brought up to a good state of repair. The Commercial Development &amp; Regeneration Manager said she was awaiting a structure report, and would advise Members further in due course.</p>	<p><b>JF</b></p>

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