

REPORT TO: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 5 OCTOBER 2005

SUBJECT: MUSEUMS SERVICE: DUFFTOWN TOWER

BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To report that Dufftown Tower is no longer required for Council museum purposes and to highlight the need for supplementary and future expenditure on its fabric.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section E (22) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the provision of museums and related services.

2. Background

- 2.1 Dufftown Tower was erected in 1839 and is category B listed. A single storey was added in 1925. The upper floors of the tower were gutted several years ago due to deterioration in the fabric and only the ground floor is used for any purpose.
- 2.2 The ground floor was shared in the past between the Council's Museums Service and the Tourist Information Centre (TIC), but since 1977 the premises have been used solely for TIC purposes at a budgeted net cost to the Museums Service of £664 per annum. The rent is £1,485 per annum exclusive of VAT and rates. The lease period is 12 months and the Council is liable to maintain the property wind and watertight while the tenant is liable for all internal repairs and maintenance for the area they occupy. The museum's budget includes a sum of £575 for minor repairs, but cannot meet any substantial costs in respect of the upgrading of the building. The TIC has indicated that it would want to retain tenancy of the ground floor of the premises given their key location and that they would welcome appropriate development of the upper floors by another appropriate organisation.
- 2.3 In recent years there have been expressions of concern from community groups about the condition of the tower and outline proposals that the tower might, through time, be repaired and renovated for wider use.
- 2.4 During the year thus far the sum of £11,258 has required to be found for essential repairs. This expenditure will lead to an overspend in the museum's annual repairs and maintenance budget.
- 2.5 A condition survey report carried out by Ed Rattray, Building Surveyor, of the Council's Property Services in July 2005 has identified essential works of £17,500 excluding Property Services costs and desirable works of £18,500. Of these essential works required £11,258 has already been expended, leaving £6,242. The desirable works would bring the building up to a satisfactory condition to allow future development for other purposes. The condition survey is contained in **Appendix I**. The Council has a legal obligation to maintain its listed buildings, with Historic Scotland having the powers to enforce any essential works. While there is no specific obligation on the owner of a listed building to maintain it, there are statutory powers available to planning authorities and the Secretary of State to take action where listed buildings have deteriorated. These powers allow them to carry out

urgent works for the preservation of listing buildings, to serve “repairs notices” and to compulsorily acquire listed buildings in need of repair.

- 2.6 Any future development for whatever purposes identified would require further funding.
- 2.7 At this time and for the foreseeable future, the Council’s Museums Service cannot identify any purposes relevant to its activities.

3. The Proposals

- 3.1 Given that Dufftown Tower has not been used for Council museum purposes for a significant length of time and the ground floor is leased for TIC purposes, Committee is asked to note that there are no intentions by the Council’s Museums Service to use the Tower for Council museum purposes.
- 3.2 Given that a sum of £11,258 from a total required of £17,500 for essential works has already been committed and will lead to an overspend in the Museums’ property repairs budget, it is proposed that the balance of £6,242 be referred to Policy & Resources Committee in respect of essential works in maintaining an historic B listed building. Hence additional provision will be required.
- 3.3 Given the potential of the upper floors of the Tower possibly being developed for other uses and that the Tower will require ongoing maintenance by the Council, it is proposed that a further report be presented to a future meeting of this Committee outlining possible options in respect of Council or community use and future costs associated with the maintenance of a B listed building in the Council’s care.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of essential repairs is estimated at £17,500 of which £11,258 has already been expended from the Museums’ property repairs budget which will be overspent as a result. The balance of £6,242 will require to be referred to Policy & Resources.
- 4.2 Should the Council decide at some future date to proceed with the desirable repairs as outlined in the Building Surveyor’s report then the sum of £18,500 would require to be found.
- 4.3 Given that it is unlikely that the Council would ever be in a position to dispose of the property then the continuing obligation to maintain it would remain. The current budget for so doing is inadequate and will require to be addressed as part of the budget setting process.

5. Staffing Implications

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications.

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 If carried out, the essential repairs would improve the appearance of this key heritage landmark within Dufftown.
- 6.2 Any further developments of the tower would enhance the environment and the visitor experience.

7. Sustainable Development Implications

- 7.1 If carried out the essential repairs would ensure ongoing use of the building. If carried out and subject to appropriate community involvement the desirable repairs would increase the opportunity for increased external funding and hence strengthen longer term sustainability.

8. Consultations

- 8.1 Consultations have been carried out with the officers of the Senior Management Team of the Educational Services Department, all of whom support the recommendations within this report.
- 8.2 Consultations have been carried out with the Head of Estates Services who agrees with the recommendations.
- 8.3 Consultations have been carried out with Mr Ian Dunlop of Visit Scotland who identifies that the TIC would want to retain its tenancy of the ground floor of the Tower and would welcome the development of the remainder of the Tower by an appropriate organisation.
- 8.4 Lorraine Paisey, Senior Accountant, has been consulted in respect of the financial implications which she would identify as accurate.

9. Corporate Plan

- 9.1 The proposals support the priorities within the Environmental Programme of the Corporate Plan.

10. Recommendations

10.1 In considering Dufftown Tower Committee is recommended to:

- i. note that the Council's Museums Service no longer requires the premises for Council museum purposes;**
- ii. note that essential repairs at a cost of £11,258 have been met from the Museum's budget and to refer the supplementary expenditure required of £6,242 to Policy and Resources for approval;**
- iii. note that a report will be presented to a future meeting of this committee outlining possible options in respect of future use and maintenance costs of this B listed historic property.**

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Background Papers:
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Dufftown Tower