

**EGREMONT MARKET TOWN INITIATIVE – PROPERTY ACQUISITION**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr J Hewitson  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Mike Tichford  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Brian Kirkbride/Simon Walker

**Summary:** To support Egremont Market Town Initiative with strategic acquisition of a vacant property to allow provision for a new community facility

<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the following be agreed: 1) To support a funding bid to West Lakes Renaissance to acquire a Key property in Egremont. 2) That, with the necessary reassurances on risk, the Council acquire, hold and maintain the property for a period not more than eighteen months. 3) That the project be built into the Capital Programme.
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**Impact on Delivering Corporate Objectives** The Market Town Initiative is a Regional Programme focusing on the Regeneration of Market Towns. The principle aim of the programme is to stimulate Economic Regeneration principally focusing on creating jobs, Enterprise Development Business Growth, Built Environment Improvements and skills development, all of which complement the Council's Regeneration Strategies.

**Impact on other Statutory Objectives** To bring empty properties back into use.

**Financial and Human Resource Implications:** The project will be fully funded by West Lakes Renaissance. Officer time will be serviced through the Community Renewal Team and Market Town Manager.

The funding application is for £90,400 and a decision is expected from West Lakes Renaissance Board on 25 January 2006. Assuming funding is approved there will be no financial implication on Copeland Borough Council.

**Project and Risk Management** The project will not proceed if West Lakes Renaissance do not approve full funding to mitigate risks against the Council

**Key Decision Status**

- **Financial:** Yes  
- **Ward:** None

**Other Ward Implications:** None

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Community Action for Egremont is a registered charity, formed in 1995 by Egremont churches and the Town Council as its primary partners with the primary aim to offer relief to those members of Egremont's communities who are in condition of need, hardship and distress, especially those who suffer as a result of unemployment or of their unfavourable social and economic circumstances. Since its inception it has occupied a number of different premises within the town, offering advice and guidance with various partner organisations.
- 1.2 In January 1999, Community Action For Egremont (CAFE) moved to a shop in the Market Place, Egremont. These premises became uninhabitable during 2003 and at present the organisation is temporarily in abeyance due to a lack of suitable premises.
- 1.3 As part of Egremont's Market Town Initiative Health Check and Mini-Masterplan, the concept of a community resource centre has been developed, with a number of service providers and voluntary agencies indicating their wish to work with such a facility.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 A feasibility study and business plan for the creation and operation of the Community Resource Centre identified suitable premises which offer potential for reasonable income generation for the successful operation of the facility. These premises are currently available and an acceptable purchase price has been negotiated by independent agents on behalf of West Lakes Renaissance and CAFE. The Community Resource Centre project will bring a prominent disused property back into economic use in a central location within Egremont's historic Market Place area, assisting the regeneration of the town and providing a base for a number of Market Town Initiative funded projects such as InBiz, and the Employment Access service as well as existing community led schemes including the Credit Union.
- 2.2 Copeland Borough Council are being asked to help facilitate the project through acquiring and holding of the property for a fixed period of eighteen months. During this time the scheme will be taken from outline design stage to start on site at which point Copeland Borough Council will release the property to CAFE, or should the scheme fail to proceed, dispose of the property on the open market.
- 2.3 The Council and Egremont Market Town Partnership are currently developing a funding application to support acquisition of the building. WLR Board will be considering the application on the 25 January 2006, to support the full costs. The Council will only be in a position to proceed with the acquisition if full funding is approved. If not approved the project will not be implemented.

## **3. RISKS AND MITIGATIONS**

- 3.1 A number of provisions have been made within the funding bid to West Lakes Renaissance in order to mitigate the risks and costs associated with the acquisition, holding and disposal of the property. A risk assessment has been carried out by CBC Officers and attached at Appendix A.
- 3.2 The following have been allowed for in the application to West Lakes Renaissance for funding:
  - Cost of the purchase will be fully borne by West Lakes Renaissance
  - Full cost of insuring, securing, making safe and maintaining safety of property and site during CBC ownership, will be borne by West Lakes Renaissance

- No form of clawback will be enforced when/if the building is transferred to CAFE or disposed of in any other way (other than retention by WLR of the proceeds of the disposal, even if this disposal should be less than the acquisition price).
- If the scheme to create the Community Resource Centre does not take place and it is agreed that disposal of the property is the most appropriate step, then the full costs of disposal will be borne by WLR.

#### **4.0 COSTS**

Detailed costs and funding for acquisition of the project are presented in a Part II Report of this Executive.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 Supporting the creation of this valuable community facility will show Copeland Borough Council's continued commitment to the regeneration of its market towns.
- 5.2 Appropriate allowances have been made to ensure that there is a very low risk to the Council in taking this action.

#### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Risk Assessment

#### **List of Background Documents:**

The Property Building Survey and CAFE Community Resource Centre Feasibility and Business Plan are available in the Member's Room

#### **List of Consultees:**

Corporate Team, Cllr E Woodburn, Cllr Jim Hewitson, Paul Robson, Chris Lloyd, Clinton Boyce, Catherine Nicholson