

**Notes of the Meeting of the Blenheim World Heritage Site Management
Plan Working Party**

Held on Thursday 12 January 2017 at 2.00pm

In Room G22, Woodgreen, Witney

PRESENT

Councillors: J C Cooper, Mrs E H N Fenton and Dr E M E Poskitt

Officers: Janice Bamsey and Paul Cracknell

10. NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2016

The Working Party received the notes of the meeting held on 31 October, 2016.

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Enright and Mr Handley.

12. BLENHEIM PALACE WORLD HERITAGE SITE – REVISED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Strategic Director setting out the draft response to the revised Blenheim World Heritage Site Management Plan.

Ms Bamsey advised that, with the exception of a solution to the concerns raised by Members in relation to the poor condition of and potential future uses for the buildings at 'Furze Platt', the observations previously made by the Working Party during the consultation process had been incorporated within the revised Management Plan.

Mrs Fenton enquired whether the Council was in a position to impose sanctions against the estate should it fail to comply with the Plan. In response, Mr Cooper advised that the primary sanction in such circumstances lay with UNESCO in terms of withdrawal of World Heritage Site designation. However, he stressed that the estate took pride in the upkeep of its assets and their environment.

Ms Bamsey advised that, whilst the Council had statutory powers in relation to Listed Buildings considered to be at risk, it generally sought to intervene in a less formal manner. She explained that the estate provided annual updates on progress as part of which it would be obliged to justify any failure of compliance. The estate also worked closely with both Historic England and Natural England with regard to the built and natural environment and those organisations would be better placed to address any issues that may arise.

Dr Poskitt noted that the Plan made reference to improvements in links between the estate and local communities and suggested that, given local adverse reaction to recent development proposals upon land in its ownership; it would be beneficial if it were to seek to strengthen links and communication with the local communities.

Mr Cooper acknowledged that there had been improvements in this respect and, whilst welcoming the progress to date, the Working Party **AGREED** that the Blenheim Estate be encouraged to seek to improve communication with the surrounding parishes.

Having considered the proposed response further, the Working Party **AGREED** that the comments set out in Appendix 2 to the report be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 2.25pm