

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Wednesday 9th January 2013 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames

Present:

Cllr Iain Littlejohn	Chairman
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	Vice-Chairman
Cllr Katie Nobes	
Cllr Lesley Legge	
Cllr Alison Rooke	

In attendance:

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Ms Johannah Aynsley	Guildhall Manager
Mr David Boyd	Consultant DMZ Studios/ Lewandowski Willcox Architects
Mr Dan Lewandowski	Partner, Lewandowski Willcox Architects
Ms Michelle Purnell	Senior Architect, Lewandowski Willcox Architects
Mr Peter Turvey	Partner, PT Projects
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)

88. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Monica Lovatt (Mayor), Cllr Sandy Lovatt (Chairman Finance and General Purposes Committee) and Ms Heather Brown (Co-opted member).

89. **Declarations of Interest**

Pecuniary interests

None.

90. **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 18th December 2012.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 18th December 2012 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

91. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

92. **Date of next meeting and calendar of meetings.**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting had been agreed as Wednesday 6th February 2013 at 5.30 pm and that subsequent meetings had been arranged for:

Monday 4th March;
Wednesday 3rd April;
Tuesday 30th April.

93. **Exclusion of the Public including the Press**

The Chairman moved and it was **resolved**:

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

94. **Confidential Appendix**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 2012 and it was **resolved** that these be signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

95. **Guildhall Development and Improvements**

It was noted that following the procurement of architectural services for Stage Two of the Guildhall Improvement Project, Lewandowski Willcox had been appointed by the Council. They would act as architects to RIBA Stage D, up to and improving the submission of planning permission.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, introduced the personnel from Lewandowski Willcox. Dan Lewandowski was a partner of Lewandowski Willcox and he was accompanied by Mr David Boyd who was sole partner of DMZ Studios and was working with Lewandowski Willcox architects, and Ms Michele Purnell who was a senior architect at Lewandowski Willcox.

Mr Lewandowski talked Members through the presentation which had been given by Lewandowski Willcox at the interviews before Christmas. He highlighted some of the major objectives which the architects were intending to achieve and the principle that they work on a basis of modular phasing of the development, i.e the Council would be looking to design the full project as outlined in the brief but would wish a modular approach to be taken to the development. This would enable the basic objectives to be achieved through the utilisation of the core funding (up to £750,000) and then further work would be undertaken in a staged manner, subject to funding, to eventually secure the full scheme.

Mr Lewandowski stated that the sketch plans which had been presented at the interview should be considered as indicative as they were based on the original site visit and the information available at that time. Now that they had been appointed as project architects there would be significant work to undertake in order to progress the project, including

undertaking various surveys, reviewing the current levels and plans and focussing in on the various parts of the brief which had been provided.

In taking matters forward, the Chairman had produced a list of items which he considered would require discussion at this stage, and this had been circulated to all Members earlier in the day. Hard copies of this paper were available at the meeting and Members worked their way through this document.

The document is reproduced below, with the discussions and decisions in *italics*. Comments from Lewandowski Willcox are abbreviated to LW.

1. Run through Guildhall Committee project plan timeline

- a. Key date for the Council is to be ready for public consultation at end of March and to talk to public in April.
LW stated that this timetable was realistic provided that decisions were taken on a timely basis. Meeting agreed that there should be a briefing organised for Members as soon as possible, ideally by the end of January.
- b. Confirm the key products/deliverables
As per the Project Brief; need to contact Vale Conservation Officer at an early stage. Town Clerk to do this.
- c. Key decision points
LW and Peter Turvey will liaise to produce project timetable by 16th January 2013.
- d. Confirm that the commission will be to design for overall scheme, plus intermediate design(s) including a £500- £750k initial step.
Agreed.

2. Agree contact points:

- a. Peter Turvey – contract, deliverables, technical.
- b. Johannah Aynsley – access, operational.
- c. Nigel Warner – overall responsibility.
LW agreed but asked for a primary contact on the Project, who could decide on dissemination of information, decision-making on the various matters. Decided that this should be the Town Clerk.

3. Review points:

- a. LW to attend the monthly Guildhall Committee Meetings and provide status update plus any decisions which Town Clerk escalates.
Agreed.
- b. In addition a weekly status meeting which should be in Council offices with dial in option, particularly if nothing major to discuss. This should include Town Clerk, Quantity Surveyor, Guildhall Manager, Architect representation plus Chairman of Committee.
Meeting also agreed that Cllr Alison Rooke should be part of this meeting. The meeting would take place every Friday at 2 pm at the Old Abbey House.
Purpose of this meeting is to be operational in its nature to manage progress and unblock any issues. The Guildhall Committee is the main steering group where decisions get made.
Agreed.
- c. Are there any points where we may need extra or to change timing of Guildhall Committee? Meetings are already planned for:
Monday 4th March (*note – new date agreed at meeting, moved from 7th*);

Wednesday 3rd April;
Tuesday 30th April.

Agreed to keep to above dates but there would be a need for flexibility as the Project proceeded and additional meetings could be called if necessary.

d. LW enquired on the position regarding grant funding. It was reported that the Council had found that this required detailed plans and costings, which would be produced over the coming months. David Boyd suggested that the possibility of a grant from Sport England could be looked at, as activities such as Judo and Dancing take place. He had been involved in a successful application in Chichester and could introduce the Council to officers of Sport England.

4. What involvement do LW need from Council, staff and other stakeholders?

a. Suggest a session with full Council fairly early in the process to give Members the opportunity to input any specific ideas or potential requirements that they have.

Agreed as above, to aim for meeting by end of January.

b. Suggest a formal meeting of Council to review the proposed scheme of work to consult with the public on, with a view to then applying for planning permission at the end of March.

Agreed.

c. What additional access LW require to staff, existing users, community stakeholders, Conservation Officer, planning, etc – if any?

LW will let Town Clerk know in this regard.

5. Information Requirements – what data do LW need from us?

a. Building plans

Available and LW have these but would contact Ridge, who had surveyed the building, for the CAD drawings. They would also liaise with Ridge regarding any enhancements required to the plans.

b. Services plans

Access to be given to all available records.

c. Building and asbestos surveys

Town Clerk to supply these. Services Engineers to visit building; LW will liaise with Guildhall Manager.

d. Anything else?

See below.

6. Business Case:

a. LW should have copy of Mayfield Arts reports and opportunity to speak with Ron Inglis.

Agreed.

b. What involvement would LW recommend for Mayfield Arts at this stage based on experience with similar projects?

David Boyd suggested that there would be a need to re-engage Mr Inglis to comment and assist in relation to matters such as the suggestion for a standalone cinema, public consultation and seating. The Guildhall Manager also suggested that he may assist in the work towards obtaining grants. See also (c) below.

- c. Suggest present some sort of business planning/business case input associated with the designs as part of the proposal to Council and subsequent consultation. Is this usual and should we commission Mayfield Arts on this?

Resolved:

1. *That discussions be held between the Town Clerk, the architects and Mayfield Arts with a view to a proposal coming forward to the next meeting of this Committee;*
2. *That in the interim, that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to procure advice from Mayfield Arts within a budget of £1,000.*

7. Are there any site visits which LW would recommend?

- a. Can we arrange next Guildhall Committee meeting at this site?

The Guildhall Manager stated that she was in contact with “Oxford Inspires” who may be of assistance. Mr Boyd stated that he could arrange a visit to a project at Chichester and other Members also mentioned the Newbury Corn Exchange. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting.

8. Consultation process:

- a. Suggest a very early product to be a design for the consultation process

Agreed. There was a query regarding what the Council would be consulting on. The Chairman, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, stated that the understanding was that the Council would consult on the full Phase Two Scheme but that this consultation would include a clear timeline of what the Council was looking to commission immediately and what the future steps would be.

- b. It should include but not be limited to the following:

- i. Public meeting, which is well advertised, plus invitations sent to groups who we think may be particularly interested eg users, community groups, film club, etc. We may want to do twice, one evening and one on a weekend?

This was agreed. It was also suggested that a stall could be set out on the Market Place and also in the “Community Shop” if the latter is operational at that point. Members requested that the Easter week be avoided.

- ii. Briefing and press pack (both local paper and BBC Oxford have already expressed desire to run story at this point). Include Abingdon blog as press too in this case

Agreed.

- iii. Social media and web site consultation mechanism to go through Guildhall Committee new town portal plus choose Abingdon mailing list, plus Guildhall Facebook and twitter feeds.

Agreed.

- iv. Exhibition in lobby of Guildhall for 1-2 weeks. What is recommendation on manning?

Whilst it was considered that it would be desirable for the exhibition to be staffed, and this would be the case on the Market Place, it was considered that the exhibition should be capable of being understood without the staffing presence.

- v. We want to include a physical model – ideally showing the different phases of the scheme

Agreed.

- vi. It would be good if we can have a couple of seats for them to try out and maybe give feedback on? Anything else physical that would be relevant for people to see?
Members agreed that if possible a sample of suggested retractable seating should be made available as part of the process, and this would be something which Mayfield Arts could advise in relation to.
 - vii. Exhibition should cover full vision for the Guildhall - not just the phase 2 aspect
Agreed.
 - viii. Consultation should give people a feel for a day in the life of the new Guildhall and also an example of what sort of programme of events we would run.
Agreed.
 - ix. Messaging must be careful about full scheme compared with the initial steps – must give a sense of journey which will get people enthused but not raise unrealistic expectations
Agreed.
 - x. There may be an opportunity to also put some posters etc in the community shop, although would be better if the Council focused people on coming to the Guildhall as it means more if they can see the building and it is an opportunity to promote and get people inside the building. Council should also promote on notice boards and have a Market Place banner.
Agreed.
 - xi. The consultation needs to include some specific questions where the Council would welcome public input eg how often would you come to the cinema, what sort of films would you like to see screened, what sorts of live events would you be interested in, maybe comments on colour scheme?, which of the following types of event would you like to attend? Etc
Members were keen that this be a true consultation process, where the Council would value and take seriously input from the public.
 - xii. To what extent do we want to offer up a choice of designs/schemes?
This would be undertaken where possible.
 - xiii. We need to consider how to collect and utilise feedback received by public
Agreed this would need to be considered when the detail of the consultation is looked at.
 - xiv. Are there any other items to add?
LW stated that they would wish to liaise with the District Council Conservation Officer at an early stage and also follow the local planning pre-application advice process. LW would take flood risk advice and advice on energy efficiency.
- c. Guildhall Manager and Ms Heather Brown to give some consideration to other elements of Guildhall development and wider initiatives that the Council would wish to include in the exhibition at the same time (but limit this to say 30% of space as we want the dominant message to be about the phase 2 plans). Examples could include room packages, wedding offering, community packages, forthcoming events, new web portal, Heather's mobile media product, Proms in the Park event, Science Fair trailer?, the Museum? Any update on precinct? Any other ideas?
Members agreed with this approach whilst stressing the need to keep the focus on the Guildhall.

- d. Should also make this as an opportunity to use the café/bar area

Other points raised:

LW would seek to be clear on what assumptions were being made, at an early stage.

The Committee considered that it was important to involve the full Council at an early stage so that Members could suggest ideas and raise questions. These could then be addressed during the process.

LW suggested that an approach using a “room data sheet” should be considered. The uses of each space/ room would be examined and agreement reached as to how each space/ room should be used, in order to guide the process.

9. Input into design from the Committee at this point:

Members shared a number of ideas on the specific design proposals by LW but confirmed they felt the scheme LW proposed was a good starting point for further development or something similar. Members emphasised that the sprung floor in the Abbey Hall should be retained. Use of foyer area for information display should also be considered.

The meeting rose at 9.37 pm.