

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 12th May 2016 7pm In the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present:

Cllr Dennis Garrett	Chairman
Cllr Mike Badcock	Vice-Chairman
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Robert Hall	
Cllr Jan Morter	

In Attendance

Mr David Boyd	Lewandowski Architects
Mr Peter Turvey	Quantity Surveyor, PT Projects
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer / RFO

One member of the public, Dr Jim Halliday

G5 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Cllr Brian Hedley and the Mayor, Cllr Alice Badcock.

G6 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

G7 Minutes

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 29th February 2016 and 9th May 2016.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 29th February 2016 and 9th May 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G8 **Matters arising**

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

G9 **Public Participation**

Dr Jim Halliday wished to make a statement with regard to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee of 29th February 2016 and in particular Minute G38, Public Participation.

At that meeting, Dr Halliday had suggested that consideration might be given to converting the former bar area on the second floor into a storage area which might make a very good muniment room. He had stated that one of the advantages of this area was that there would be an area in which the records could be examined by the Archivists' visitors in the glazed seating area. It is then minuted "the Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services stated that glazing would be an expensive item". Dr Halliday wished to clarify his comments. His suggestion was not to have additional glazing in this area, what he was suggesting was that this particular area was already glazed and therefore would provide a light seating environment for visitors to the Council's archives.

G10 **Guildhall Development Working Group**

The Committee considered the appointment of the above working group for 2016/17.

It was resolved that the following members be appointed to the Guildhall Development Working Group for the municipal year 2016/17:

Cllrs Mike Badcock
Cllr Neil Fawcett
Cllr Dennis Garrett
Cllr Jan Morter.

G11 **Guildhall Development Project**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above, as circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman, Cllr Dennis Garrett, then invited the architect, Mr David Boyd (Lewandowski Architects) to talk members through the main developments since the last meeting.

Report Item 1: Application for planning permission

Mr Boyd stated that planning permission had been applied for on 15th March 2016. It was anticipated that a decision would be received from Vale of White Horse District Council within the next week or so. He noted that when viewing the application online, so far there had been no objections but there had been quite a few helpful comments in relation to items such as signage, landscaping and exterior lighting. He stated that this was to be expected as it was common for such details to be reserved and for planning permission to then be conditional. Mr Boyd stated that the comments on the Highway Authority were still awaited (*For information: Planning Decision Notice P16/V0687/LB – conditional consent was granted on the 27th May 2016*).

Report Item 2: Development of the plans

Mr Boyd then referred members to his project summary, which had been updated from the February 2016 meeting and which gave an up to date statement of where the Council was. This is attached to these minutes. This had been circulated to members together with the latest plans which were:

- Ground floor plan – Core scheme: Planning Drawing No 200/00;
- First floor plan - Core scheme: Planning Drawing No 201/00;
- Second floor plan- Core scheme: Planning Drawing No 202/00;
- Proposed elevations: Drawing No 300;
- GA (General arrangements) Ground floor plan – proposed core scheme: Drawing No 200/03;
- GA First floor Plan - proposed core scheme: Drawing No 201/02;
- GA Second floor plan- proposed core scheme: Drawing No 202/01;
- Proposed section A: Drawing No 400/02;
- Landscaping – page 11 of the Design and Access Statement (February 2016) issued as part of the planning application.

Mr Boyd stated that the team was now at the detailed design stage, RIBA Stage E.

On the ground floor, Mr Boyd made the following points to members:

- The scheme would open up the area.
- There would be a landscaping scheme for the area fronting on to Abbey Close, with the steps to the current reception /atrium area being removed and a new terraced area being put in place.
- There was a significant structural element to the proposed works.
- The new entrance to the Guildhall at street level would be fully glazed with folding doors, there would also be a new main staircase just off the new entrance linking directly to the Abbey Hall level.

- The project as it stood was subject to further need for design input such as the reception and the servery.
- The current lift would be refurbished as would the adjacent disabled WC's.
- Mr Boyd stated that the architects had met with the approved building inspector who stated that there may not be a need for the proposed rear escape stairs, and this would yield a potential cost saving (*Update: this item was subsequently been omitted as not required by Building Control*).
- The ramp would be removed from the rear of the building.
- The car park would require regrading and resurfacing.
- In relation to the new passageway between the old building and the new building there would not actually be a requirement to ramp this. In response to a question from a member as to the difference in height between the ground floor of the old building and the new building, Mr Boyd responded that this was a difference of around 5-6 steps.
- A new family WC was included in the plans however there were some significant structural issues in relation to its location and therefore a different location was proposed. (*Update: this item has now been relocated within the male WC's but accessed off the existing circulation space*).

In relation to the proposed elevations which showed the exterior appearance of the building the following was noted:

- There were 14 very large tall windows to the Abbey Hall and it could be possible to reduce the height of these by one metre, thus yielding a saving.
- In response to a question from a member regarding the potential sound leakage from the grilles above the windows, Mr Boyd stated that it was proposed that these would be sealed off by a skin of dense rendered blockwork.
- Mr Boyd stated that there would be the potential to have some 'effect lighting' to brighten up the outside of the building, perhaps through the use of uplighters 'washing' the walls. In response to a question from a member it was confirmed that it would be possible to project images, for example a poppy or a Christmas tree onto the walls of the new building.
- The facade of the building would be cleaned up and repaired as much as the budget would allow.
- Mr Boyd stated that at the rear of the building, ie looking out towards the car park, there was not much work planned. However, in the current plans there were two large condensers and an air handling unit on the roof. The architects and the mechanical and electrical engineer were now looking at the possibility of moving these units to the back of the building into one of the alcoves, at ground floor level. This was work in progress but had the potential to yield a major cost saving (*Update: the*

two proposed condensers are as noted now at ground level located within two structural bays. The proposed AHU has now been omitted).

- Mr Boyd then turned to the first floor plans. The Abbey Hall would accommodate approximately 200 people and the retractable seating would be positioned roughly where the orchestra pit is at the moment. The new stage area was at the opposite end of the hall to the current stage area. The current stage area would be used for general storage space which would mean that the current unsatisfactory arrangement of having to store chairs, tables, etc. in the alcoves would no longer be necessary and so it would be possible to tidy up the Abbey Hall. There was a discussion regarding the area which was marked “new cloaks” area which it was understood was also being used as a green room. Different views were expressed regarding whether this was an appropriate sharing of use or whether there should be two separate areas for these functions (*Update: further detail design progress has highlighted that the existing Abbey Hall floor would need to be strengthened to cope with the retractable seat loading (note an increase in the original proposed seating capacity from around 120 up to 200 now).*)
- Mr Boyd reported that whilst the ceiling was being lowered it was still quite high. The proposed new acoustic ceiling, full height wall to the stage area, triple glazed replacement windows and blocked off high level vents, would enhance the acoustic isolation and general performance of the hall considerably.
- A member queried how the stored retractable seating would look. Mr Boyd reported that it would concertina to a vertical space with panels. He considered that it would look attractive. The seating itself would be operated through an automatic mechanism and he would advise that the Council installed retractable seating which had an aisle on both sides. It would be necessary for members to look at colours / swatches of the seating. At the back of the Abbey Hall the lift, lift lobby and assisted WC would all be total refurbished.

Finally, Mr Boyd drew members’ attention to the second floor plans.

- There would be a void over the new general storage area (existing stage area). In response to a question from a member, Mr Boyd confirmed that it would be possible to design this so that an extra floor could be installed at a later date, which would provide more space.
- At the other end of the building the area which was previously occupied by the organ would be closed in and could be used for storage. It may be possible for this area also to be used as a green room / changing area but the building inspectors had commented that there could be a problem if it is designated as anything other than storage space due to a lack of disabled access.

- Mr Boyd reported that the updated designs now meant that only one platform lift was required, this to be located in the stair area. This would enable someone to obtain wheelchair access from the Mayor's Parlour down to the lower area and could be potentially extended in the future to reach the 2nd floor level.
- The quantity surveyor, Mr Turvey, commented that there would be a saving from having just one platform lift rather than two, although there would be an additional cost to cutting into the stairs. It was also noted that moving the family WC would yield a cost saving. Members considered that it would be helpful to go and look at a platform lift in operation locally and it was suggested that this would be something that the working group could do.
- In response to a query from a member, Mr Boyd confirmed that there were many types of retractable seating units available and this would need to be looked at.
- The Committee thanked Mr Boyd for his presentation.

It was **resolved** that the presentation be noted and the work undertaken by the architects and the working group be endorsed and taken forward for further development.

Report Item 3: Updated cost plan and project plan

The Council's quantity surveyor, Peter Turvey of PT Projects, gave an update on progress in relation to costings. The cost plan was a dynamic plan and as more information and detail on the project was being gathered, then some costs were increasing and others decreasing. Additional structural works were necessary in order to enable the plans to be implemented. However the cost of these roughly equated to the saving which would be yielded through the decision not to replace the boilers. He emphasised, as previously, that the agreed budget did not allow for furniture, kitchen equipment, EPOS machines and audio visual items such as projectors and sound equipment. There was also no budget for other items of operational equipment. Mr Turvey stated that there was £40,000 within the costings for stage lighting and £42,000 for retractable seating.

A member expressed a general concern that it appeared that as additional items were scoped into the project costs were again rising. In this regard it was noted that it had previously been decided to go out to tender on the Council's full vision.

Mr Turvey suggested that the Committee should next take a look at the project and have a strategy as to how costs could be reduced, this strategy being one which would involve deciding on which were the core parts of the project and which were the areas which the Committee would be prepared to lose from the project. This would not be an easy process but could be undertaken following

receipt of tenders, when the Committee would then be working with real prices or could be undertaken now, before the tender process commenced.

Mr Boyd noted that the Council had at its March meeting approved a budget of £2,184,000 for the project but that this was based on the original scope which concentrated on the Abbey Hall and the area below. The scope of the project had now grown to include the area linking the new and the old building, ie the current reception and bar area and this had increased costs by approximately £250,000.

There was a discussion regarding the balustrade at the front of the building and there was some concern that this could attract people to loiter, perhaps in an anti-social manner, in the evenings. It also represented an additional cost and it was **resolved** at this point to take the balustrade out of the plans.

The Chairman stated that consideration of what should be core to the scheme and what items it would be possible to cut back from the project would be a priority for the working group to consider. A member stated that it would make sense to ensure that structural enabling works take place at this stage so that it would be possible to implement any items which had to be dropped from the scheme at this stage, at a later date. Mr Turvey reported that work was continuing on the cost plan and currently two items which were being worked on were the costs of the lift in its new position and the costs of the acoustic scheme.

The Town Clerk stated that the detailed cost plan and programme was due to be discussed under the confidential item but that the current estimate amounted to £2,443,303.

Report Item 4: Business Plan

The Committee noted that prior to tender the working group would review the business plan to reflect the latest position.

Report Item 5: Consultation

The Committee considered the Council's ongoing consultation in relation to the project. It was noted that statutory consultation was currently taking place as part of the planning process. It was also noted that the Council had, throughout the project, kept the public informed through its meetings, the website, the media and the Town Crier. The public had also participated by asking questions and making statements at meetings. It was considered that now would be a good time to consult further regarding the plans for the future and it was **resolved**:

1. To undertake consultation with individual users as previously agreed.

2. To review the information on the website and keep it regularly updated.
3. To produce an information leaflet.
4. To organise and open session, with members, the architects and officers being in attendance with plans, leaflets, etc.

(A date was agreed for 18th June 2016. However, it was later considered that this date should be moved back to July, so that the consultation could be informed following the receipt of pre-tender estimates.)

Report Item 6: Decant of the New Building

The Town Clerk reported that the Council's archives had been moved temporarily to the Berkshire Records Office, as previously agreed, on the day of the meeting, 12th May 2016. He was pleased to report that this move had proceeded very smoothly. The Committee reiterated that it was Council policy that a new muniment room would be created as part of the Guildhall Development and that the Town Council remained committed to retaining its archives for the benefit of the people of Abingdon.

The Committee considered that now that the archives had been moved, the Council should press on with the decant of the new building ahead of the building works. It was noted that there was a delegation to the Guildhall Development Working Group to consider and dispose of any equipment, furniture or other contents (not including the Council chairs for which there was already an extant resolution) which were surplus to the Council's requirements.

Resolved: that the report of the Town Clerk be approved.

G12 **Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO in relation to the above, as circulated with the agenda.

Resolved: that the report of the Treasurer / RFO be approved.

G13 **Calendar of meetings for 2016/17**

It was noted that meetings of the Committee for 2016/17 had been agreed as follows:

- Thursday 1st September;
- Thursday 1st December;
- Thursday 23rd February 2017.

It was also noted that it was likely that there would need to be changes to dates and / or additional meetings scheduled during the year. These would be arranged by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Committee and made public as soon as such changes to dates or new dates had been set.

G14 **Exclusion of the Public Including the Press**

The Chairman thanked the public attendees for their interest in the project. He then moved and it was **resolved:**

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1060 (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.

Note on confidentiality: it should be appreciated that it is challenging, when considering the project to retain a balance between what should be included in the open minutes and what needs to be recorded in confidential session. Rather than retain the record of all discussions in confidential session, a view has been taken, in the interests of transparency, to include as much as possible in the public domain.

G15 **Confidential appendix to meeting of 29th February 2016**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of 29th February 2016.

Resolved that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of 29th February 2016 be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

G16 **Matters Arising**

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

G17 **Guildhall Development Project**

Cost Update

The Committee received and considered a cost update from the Council's quantity surveyor, Mr Peter Turvey.

The cost update was noted.

Programme Update

The Committee received and considered a programme update from Mr Turvey. He reported that some time had been lost on the project due to the Council's requirements to obtain approvals at various stages, which had resulted in a delay to instructing the next stages and also some matters taking longer than originally anticipated. The cumulative effect was that the estimated completion date of building works was now August 2017, which was three months later than originally anticipated. Mr Turvey also reported that the professional team would probably struggle to get tender documents out in line with the programme dates as there was considerable work and information required from the structural and services engineers. However, procurement was due to commence in June. Mr Turvey suggested that procurement was a particular risk area in terms of timescale and how long this might take, but that the professional team would push this as hard as they could.

Mr Turvey reported that while there had been some delays to the programme, these had been reduced by proceeding with the technical design at the same time as the planning application was being considered by the District Council. Time had also been saved by overlapping some of the work stages.

Resolved that the report of the Mr Peter Turvey in relation to the work programme be noted and approved.

Procurement of Building Works

Mr Turvey outlined the proposed strategy in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

It was then noted that further information was required in order to enable members to consider the remaining items detailed in the confidential report of the Town Clerk and consequently it was agreed to adjourn the meeting to 7pm on Monday 23rd May 2016.

The Chairman, Cllr Dennis Garrett, thanked both the architect, Mr David Boyd, and the Quantity Surveyor, Mr Peter Turvey for their attendance at the meeting.

The meeting rose at 8.45pm.

DRAFT