

ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

GUILDHALL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12TH MAY 2016

Agenda item: 7 Report of the Town Clerk: Guildhall Development Project

Since the previous meeting of the Guildhall Committee, the working group of Councillors Mike Badcock, Neil Fawcett, Dennis Garrett and Jan Morter which was appointed “to consider the detail of this work and to bring back proposals through the Guildhall Committee” has met with the architects on a number of occasions in order to further develop the plans so that they are detailed enough to go out to tender. Many details have been discussed and consequently the architects will be present this evening to talk Members through the latest version of the plans.

1. Application for planning permission

Planning permission was applied for on 15th March 2016 and the target date for determination is 17th May 2016. The planning applications may be viewed via the Vale’s website at:

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P16/V0687/LB>

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P16/V0686/FUL>

A number of comments have been made on the application and may also be viewed via the above links.

2. Development of the Plans

The project summary, updated from the February 2016 meeting, gives an up to dated statement of where we are. This has been circulated separately together with the latest plans.

- 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.

I have also circulated the statement submitted to the last meeting, which gives context for the current position.

The architects are fully aware of the need for the scheme to be environmentally-friendly and to contribute to reducing the Council's carbon emissions as much as possible, in accordance with Council policy. However as previously stated Members should be aware that scope will be limited by the fact that there is no "new build" in this project; if the building was new build there would be many more options. There will also be a tension between what is possible and what may be considered affordable, bearing in mind that project finances are tight and, for example, potential choices to be made in relation to capital spend which may result in revenue savings.

3. Updated Cost plan and project plan

In March 2016 the Council **resolved** *that the capital budget for the Guildhall Development Project be set at £2,184,000, this sum to be incurred over the two years 2016/17 and 2017/18 and financed as follows:*

Deferred Grant £1,019,000

Loan up to £1,000,000

Balance funded from revenue budgets in relations to property and the Guildhall.

The Guildhall Committee had also previously **resolved** *the Council should now proceed with the full plans (as amended) through to tender stage at which point the Council would have actual figures and could then make a fully informed decision on how it proceeds and any value engineering, re-scoping or additional funding required.*

Any cost plan is a dynamic one. As more information and detail on the project is layered on, then some costs will increase and others decrease. The additional works approved at the last meeting increase the estimate to £2,443,303. This will have changed further and the Quantity Surveyor will be present at the meeting to report directly. The detail of this will be in the confidential section as disclosure of the Council's detailed estimates could prejudice its commercial position at a later date.

Members will be aware from the previously presented cost plan that there are items which are excluded or are risk items. The Project will need, in pulling its final estimates together, to scope in many of these items which are detailed in the November 2015 report of the QS. I

Alongside consideration of the updated cost plan, an updated programme will also be presented.

4. Business Plan

Prior to tender the Working Group will need to review the Business Plan to reflect the latest position.

5. Consultation

Statutory consultation is ongoing as part of the planning process.

The Council has, throughout the project, kept the public informed through its meetings, the website, the media and the Town Crier. The public have participated by asking questions and making statements at meeting. We are now in the formal planning statutory consultation. Alongside this would now be the time, with the detail on the new scheme being sufficient to allow this, to consult regarding the plans for the future, as previously discussed. This has been discussed by the Working Group and it is **recommending**:

- Consultation with individual users as previously agreed.
- Review information on website and regularly update;
- Produce an information leaflet.
- Organise an open session, with Members, the architects and officers being in attendance with plans, leaflets etc. This could take place one Saturday in the Roysse Room. Two dates have been suggested, 28th May or 18th June. The Working Group favoured the May date but I would now advise that the June date looks more realistic.

6. Decant of the new building

I am pleased to report that the Council's archives are due to be moved on the day of this meeting, 12th May 2016. It is Council policy that a new muniment room will be created as part of the Guildhall development and that the Town Council remains committed to retaining its archives for the benefit of the people of Abingdon.

Now the archives have been moved the Working Group will be looking to fully decant the contents of the new building ahead of building works. There are numerous items of furniture and equipment which need to be considered, some of which should be disposed of (some of which could be sold) and some of which we will wish to continue to use when the building re-opens. Note that this does not include the Council chairs for which there is already an extent resolution. The Council will need to be methodical in detailing what is to be disposed of and the method. The method of disposal will depend on factors such as the costs of disposal, the potential revenue to be gained and whether the items comply with current standards and regulations. It would be important, for instance, that any furniture or electrical items being sold were in good working order and were safe for the buyer otherwise the Council could be vulnerable should such items cause injury or damage to a third party.

In order to expedite matters in a timely and efficient manner and following on from previous discussions authority has already been delegated to the Guildhall Development Working Group to consider and dispose of any equipment, furniture or other contents which are surplus to the Council's requirements.

Decisions requested

The Committee is requested to note this report and to endorse the work undertaken by the Working Group and the Council's professional advisors since the last meeting.

There may be matters in the confidential report which will result in resolutions or recommendations, in which case as much as is possible will be minuted in open session.

Nigel Warner
Town Clerk
11th May 2016.