

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHARLES BURRELL HIGH SCHOOL SUB COMMITTEE,
HELD ON MONDAY 20th JANUARY 2014,
STARTING AT 4.00 P.M.

Present

Councillors

T J Jermy (Chairman)

Mrs S J Armes

D W R Sully

M P Brindle (Vice Chairman)

D M Crawford

Officers in attendance:

Emma Patrick

Chris Crimmen

Deputy Town Clerk

Committee Secretary

Also in attendance

Robert Ashton

Minutes

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DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from S N H Wright.

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MINUTES

Resolved as a true record the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 11th November 2103, received by Full Council on 26th November 2013, be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.

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OVERVIEW OF INFORMAL MEETINGS

Chairman to update on meetings held during December 2013 and January 2014.

Thursday 5th December – 4 pm

- Update on negotiations with Norfolk Property Services – discussions ongoing, the committee was pleased that NPS have proposed a 25 year lease with break-clauses only exercisable by the Town Council or successor lease holder, although to safeguard NPS/NCC for unexpected termination of the lease in the first few years, 3 months notice must be given.
- Draft contract for Robert Ashton – draft was circulated with the committee, this was agreed to. Payments would be made in two stages, with the final stage being paid upon receipt of the completed business plan and successful submission of the pre-feasibility SIB application – both anticipated at the end of January 2014.
- Job description for Project Co-ordinator – draft was circulated, comments from committee members and officers were taken on-board and agreed to. Role would be same rate of pay as Deputy Carnegie Co-ordinator, and would be line-managed by Carnegie Co-ordinator.
- Overview of planned trip to Leeds – Councillors attending would be Jermy, Brindle and Crawford. Preparation would take place to ensure maximum benefit from the trip.

Monday 16th December – visit to Shine (Leeds) – detailed discussions took place en route to Leeds, and back regarding potential uses for the CBHS site and a review of the SIB application form

Monday 6th January – 4 pm

- Report from visit to Shine – Leeds – Terry, Denis and Mike updated on what they had learnt from their visit to Leeds. Innovative approaches used to support small business start-ups including hot-desking arrangements and usage of rooms for free, for short time periods – free wifi throughout. Café very difficult to make even – lucky to break even. Rooms named after subjects that were taught there previously to preserve character. Purposefully do not under-cut themselves, spent a lot on quality and style and charge top-market prices. Effort put into securing few, big name tenants and others tended to follow.
- Update on contract arrangements with Robert Ashton and initial report – Roberts initial report was circulated just prior to Christmas. Potential issue with VAT for the contract that may need to be addressed.
- Update on recruitment of temporary CBHS Project Co-ordinator – the Chairman had reviewed the applications of two people that had applied for a different Town Council position, but were unsuccessful, and considered to be appropriate for this role. This point was confirmed by the Mayor who had been part of the interview panel. It was confirmed that in order to save money by negating recruitment adverts, and to expedite the matter, the two individuals would be interviewed for the role.
- Heads of terms for lease proposed by NPS on behalf of Norfolk County Council: The draft lease was discussed. It was agreed that we were not happy with a stipulation to charge market-rent for sub-letting and wanted greater clarity regarding the 5 yearly break-clauses after the initial 5 year period. We have also asked for a 30 year lease instead of the 25 years proposed. Emma undertook to relay this info to NPS.
- Health and Safety review so far – a discussion took place regarding health and safety documentation that had been received, and what files were still needed. A discussion took place regarding a metal fire escape and potential problems this may cause.

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LEASE NEGOTIATIONS WITH NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL AND NORFOLK PROPERTY SERVICES

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that she had written to NPS with the three changes to the lease:

Terms & Breaks:

- 4.1 Duration: Extend the duration of the lease from 25 to 30 years
- 4.5 Exercisable By: Add in “After first 5 years, Tenant only operable at 5 yearly intervals”

Subletting:

- 12.2 : Thetford Town Council are unhappy with the requirement to charge at an open market rate and wish to have this reference removed.

The Deputy Town Clerk had not had a reply so the Town Clerk had sent another e-mail on the 17th January 2014. Councillors T Jermy and D Crawford said they would see if they could help to get a reply as soon as possible.

CONTRACT FOR FEASIBILITY WORK

The Chairman asked Robert Ashton to update the committee on his work on the Business Plan for CBHS. Robert Ashton reported he had taken Councillors Terry Jermy, Mike Brindle & Dennis Crawford to visit Shine in Leeds. This was a school until 20 years ago and then left to become derelict. It is located in Harehills, an area of Leeds similar to some areas of Thetford in terms of severe deprivation. Todd Hannula (founder/CEO) led the purchase and conversion of the building.

Key learning points:

- Community Interest Company structure is too restrictive – they regretted adopting it;
- Profits are invested in community services;
- Owning the asset made servicing the debt an unwelcome distraction from community impact;
- They converted the building in a way that:
 - Retained a connection with the site's past, but is also flexible for today and the future;
 - Set a high standard that locals respect and look after (critics said it was 'too good' for poor people!)
- Brand is important – meeting rooms have school related names such as 'the tuck shop';
- Meeting rooms can be hired by the hour, day or longer;
- They're not the cheapest venue in town, but strive to be the best;
- Commercial bookings come because they are professional; have free parking and overt social motives. Running an event at Shine makes it obvious you care about community;
- They hire to blue chip corporates and providers of training to ex-offenders – all happily share the space;
- They have 40 entrepreneurs based there, each paying £60/month for hot-desking etc;
- They dual price – community orgs pay 20% less;
- They provide free wifi to all on the site – this brings locals in to use the café;
- Some areas are open 7 days a week, others not;
- Employees are local people – some ex offenders;
- They display art around the building – this is curated by Art College

It was agreed by Councillors that this trip was very worthwhile.

Robert Ashton went on to report that he had many conversations with many people. These have enabled him to create the visual plan for the project. More importantly, they have reassured him that the project is possible.

- Laura Handford at Orbit is exploring the idea of co-housing for older people;
- Sarah Dunswell, Social Supermarket, is looking for new sites – CBHS could be one;
- Alex Till at Menta is introducing a range of potential partners (eg Realise) and wants to operate the business centre/incubator;
- Nico Dobben and Break both keen on the idea of adding residential to the Free School;
- Kingswood property manager reviewing site plans etc and he hoped will visit in January.

Lyn Kesterton of Locality has told him that the Town Council stand a good chance of securing £10,000 pre-feasibility grant to set up the new organisation – then up to £100,000 when the Council apply as the new organisation. Lyn Kesterton has promised to review the Council's application before it is submitted.

The Chairman stated that all these threads should now be pulled together and the committee, together with Robert Ashton, should move into a phase of written commitments from all interested parties.

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ACTION PLAN FOR THE WAY AHEAD

- Agree with NPS on the final details of the lease.
- Produce a spread sheet on the Financial Forecast of CBHS.
- Agree the rate for all the individual rooms and halls.
- Finance Manager to produce a monthly budget report.
- Robert Ashton to obtain written commitments from all interested parties.
- Deputy Town Clerk will chase NPS on the written health and safety reports which have not been forthcoming. Robert Ashton will also see if he is able to obtain.
- Call a Special full Council meeting when all the necessary documentation and facts are known.

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BUDGET

The Chairman stated that the Budget would be a standard monthly item covering income and expenditure and the Deputy Town Clerk will ask the Finance Manager to prepare monthly figures for the committee's attention.

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RECRUITMENT OF CHARLES BURRELL HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

It was proposed by Councillor T Jermy and seconded by Councillor D Crawford that the interview panel for the CBHS Project Co-ordinator would consist of Councillors D Mortimer, T Jermy, S Wright and the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will arrange the interview of two excellent candidates who were unsuccessful for the Assistant Guildhall Complex Co-ordinator as soon as possible. The job will be subject to the lease being signed.

RECOMMENDATION: Town Clerk to arrange date for interview of two prospective candidates for the role of Charles Burrell High School Project Co-ordinator (Short Term Contract). Panel to consist of Councillors D Mortimer, T Jermy, S Wright and the Town Clerk. Job to be offered subject to lease being signed.

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ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman briefed that there was now an issue with the total amount payable on Robert Ashton's contract. At Full Council on 26th November 2013, it was agreed at minute no: 610/13 that 'Thetford Town Council move forward on Phase 1 by engaging Robert Ashton to prepare the initial feasibility report, develop a business plan and governance structure at a cost not exceeding £5,000'. The Chairman also stated that at the time, it was believed to be at a cost of £5000.00 as the Council would have been able to reclaim the VAT back on this expenditure. The Deputy Town Clerk briefed that the contract which was sent to Robert and signed by him states that the total amount is £5000.00 inclusive of VAT. Following discussion, the committee agreed that the amount on the contract stands. If a further £1,000 to cover the non validated V.A.T is required it will be requested from Council.

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PRESS RELEASES

The Chairman will prepare a report for the Marketing & Communications Committee to let the public know what the Town Council has been doing over the past few months to reopen CBHS as a community asset.

Chairman:

ACTION POINT	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
To move into a phase of written commitments.	Robert Ashton	01/02/2014
To produce a spreadsheet on the Financial Forecast.	Robert Ashton.	28/02/2014
Agree the rate for all individual rooms and the sports hall.	The Chairman and Deputy Town Clerk.	28/02/2014
To prepare a monthly budget report.	Finance Manager.	From February onwards.