

## CULTURAL QUARTER STEERING GROUP

Notes of the Meeting held on

8 July 2020

1. **Attendance:**

Joe Foster (Chairman), Peter Chapman, Robert Eggleston, Jacky Hilary, Chris Elkins, Richard Light, Janice Henwood, Andrew Barrett-Miles, Anne Eves, Mike Stewart, Hannah Wilson

Steve Cridland

2. **Apologies**

Sarah Greg

3. The purpose of the meeting was to bring members up to date and to discuss the way forward. Application will be made to extend the PWLB loan for a further year when it comes up for expiry in September. The Loans Board has indicated that this would probably be approved but would ask questions about the project at that stage and whether there was support for it. There are emails of support and that should not be difficult. The residents' forum would be asked to provide their backing as well.

4. **CONSULTATION**

It was previously agreed that a public consultation would be held regarding the funding of the project, however this was put off until August.

The precept we receive depends on the number of households paying council tax. The town council also based its budget on the number of new houses expected to be built and occupied. The district council had received above average applications for tax relief which means that the tax base has reduced with a probable reduction in the precept next year. It was unlikely that the expected 200 houses to be built and occupied would be realised. These are difficult economic times and the council needs to be sensitive to what people are going through. Getting the timing right for a consultation is important. This is not the right time to suggest an increase in the precept.

ABM agreed that this would not be the right time to consult and it would be flippant to push ahead with consultation at present.

Chris endorsed this view and suggested a 12 month delay.

Janice supported this view but felt that the public needed to know that our aspirations and commitment are as strong as ever and that the project has not been shelved. We need to send a message to the public in this regard. Perhaps we should rethink the role of the building and reshape our position.

## 5. FUNDRAISING

The fundraisers contract had been extended to March this year and was been terminated at that stage. He provided the information for two applications prior to termination. The schemes have however not materialised. The use of Dame Vera's name may be more apt now and this can be reviewed over the next year.

We will continue fundraising under our own steam using internal expertise.

There is not much time to find the funding if we are not to let the loan expire in 12 months. A viable plan is urgent and important.

Jacky suggested that we approach a list of people which she and Matt had compiled. Success in this area would assist consultation.

It was suggested that the Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden MP should be approached to establish whether there are any plans to fund projects such as the Beehive. It was agreed that this should be done by asking our MP Mims Davies to approach him on our behalf. It was pointed out that jobs would be created if the project progressed.

It was agreed that we should reach out to the larger funds and high net worth contributors but that it would be insensitive to approach the local community. It was agreed that a plan for fundraising was needed as well as a plan for patronage. It is important to get the bulk of the funding sorted before approaching the local community.

It was felt that New River should be approached again to see whether a deal could be brokered. Robert had already had discussions and it was pointed out that they were in it for profit which may not assist us.

The charity application is progressing and has been resubmitted to the Charity Commission to consider. We hope to hear something in the next 3 weeks.

Meeting terminated at 7.45pm