

Minutes of the Advisory Committee “New Hall Steering Group”

held on Wednesday 9th September 2020 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion

Members present: Cllrs Ron King, Zoe O’Sullivan and Richard White
(Chairman)

Co-opted members: Nicky Bishop, Keith Finch, Nick
Heasman and Clive O’Sullivan (Vice Chairman).

Members absent: None

In attendance: Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council,

1) Apologies for absence

None

2) Disclosures of interest

No interests were declared.

3) Additional agenda items

None.

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 1st July were circulated with the agenda. A correction is needed to ‘Those present’ - Nicky Bishop was present. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted with the above amendment and signed by him.

5) Project Control

a) Cost Control Chart

There has been no new cost information since the last meeting. However, based on the information provided to this meeting, an updated cost control chart can be produced after the meeting.

6) Project Finance

a) Cash in hand (held at Appeal Fund)

Balance of funds held £3,764

Village fund raising to date £21,780

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic there have been no fund raising events this year and the annual Country Fair and Flower Show was cancelled.

b) Short term liabilities (Parish Council)

i) Legal fees for new lease £1,500 (est) plus VAT.

ii) Remaining entrance widening £730 (est) plus VAT.

c) Bids for funding

None.

7) Planning & Design

a) Planning authority

i) No new communications.

b) Design and specification

- i) Kitchen - Some layouts have been considered, but more consultation is needed and in particular a better visualisation is needed which can be shared. Nick Heasman will show the current plans to the executive chef at Ashburnham Place for a view. It is assumed that the kitchen will not be used for the primary preparation of food for a large event, but as the place where the finishing and reheating is done. **Action: Clive to lead the liaison with interested parties.**
- ii) Heating and plumbing - a quotation for an underfloor heating system is to hand together with a heat recovery system. However, the latter appears to be over engineered coming in at a cost of £40k. The visual aesthetics of a heat recovery system are a challenge if the building is retain the appearance of a barn on the interior. **Action: Clive to develop.**
- iii) Lighting - It was agreed that a professional lighting designer is needed in order to design a suitable lighting system.

Members agreed that it was now necessary to drill down to the realistic costs of the remaining items. As things stand, the best estimate is that the total project cost will be £600k.

8) **Construction**

a) Tenders

- i) Wealden AM have submitted a budget summary for the cost of providing a water tight building in the sum of £379,940. As the attachment shows, this included a figure of £68,790 for external paving and block paving 200m² which is clearly a typo but by how much is a guess. As it is stated, the cost is £343 per m² and the true figure may be nearer £80 per m². This would make the correct figure £16,879 and so the Wealden budget might be £328,029.
- ii) The Wealden budget summary excludes underlay, battens, tiles and gutters estimated at £22k.
It also excludes windows and doors estimated at £50k.
Hence, the budget cost of a roofed water tight building is £400k.
- iii) Members believe that an additional £200k would be needed to complete the project and the following elements of this global sum were identified as follows:
£30k - kitchen
£23k - heating plant
£25k - heat recovery units
unquantified - electrics and lighting
unquantified - internal fit, studwork and plastering

9) **Commissioning and handover**

a) Landlords

The Clerk updated members on the current position of negotiations with the landlords (the trustees of the Ashburnham Estate) regarding the new lease. The sticking points concern two time frames.

First, although the term of the lease is stated as 50 years, there is a break clause at 35 years whereby the landlords have the option to determine (end) the lease should they obtain permission for development of the land. The compensation payable if this break clause were exercised is based on the value of the building reduced by a number of exclusions and subject to straight line depreciation so that it may be only enough to pay off any outstanding loans. Second, at the end of 50 years should the lease not be renewed (and it is expressly stipulated that there is no right to renewal), the property (land and buildings) are returned to the landlords and no compensation is payable.

Members felt that even if they felt able to recommend an investment of this scale on a tenure

of this nature, it would be hard to sell it to the village. They felt that until the issue of the lease is cleared, any further work on developing detailed cost estimates will be minimal.

b) Parish Council

Members of the committee, which is advisory only, were unanimous in requesting that the clerk convey to the parish council their wishes which are that the parish council advises the trustees of the Ashburnham Estate at an appropriate point in the negotiations that there are just three options for the way ahead -

1. The terms of the lease are amended to something acceptable to the council and the wider community.
2. The Ashburnham Estate agrees to sell the land to the parish council.
3. The project to build a new village hall on this site is pronounced dead.

10) Date of Next Meeting

Members preferred not to set a calendar date but to wait until after the next meeting of the trustees of the Ashburnham Estate and to meet in the following week.

..... Date

Signed (Chair)