

Board Minutes



Meeting Held 14th May 2018

Time 5-00pm to 7.20pm

PRESENT Jan Casson (JC), Ian Pope (IP), John Fisher (JF), Keith Siseman (KS) Alan Bowlas (AB) Monica Burns (MB) and Ivor Dixon (ID)

IN ATTENDANCE Julien Lake (JL) and Ian Guthrie (IG)

APOLOGIES Apologies were given for Ross Weddle (RW) and Ann Short (AS)

MINUTES

The minutes for the meeting held on 8th January were circulated and it was agreed that they were a true record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

FINANCE AND ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

IG issued three reports for the Board to consider.

Firstly the Budget/Actual comparison statement to the 30th April was produced which showed a substantial reduction in anticipated expenditure plus an increase in income. The reasons for the significant changes were highlighted. (remaining content has been withheld)

Secondly the draft of the Accounts for the year to 31st December 2017 were produced. The accounts reflected the revaluation of the William Elder Building which had recently taken place. The revaluation had increased the value to £285k compared with the current valuation of £230k. The figures also included a sum for an audit as opposed to an Independent Examination of the accounts which is necessary because of the level of turnover during the year. Copies of the Balance Sheet, the SOFA and the Statement of Financial Activities which show the key figures for the year were explained. The net effect of the activities increased the total assets by some £95k with unrestricted balances increasing by £25k. The figures were noted and it was agreed that the restricted balance on the Safe Steps scheme be reviewed to ensure that it is spent in accordance with the agreement which is in place.

Thirdly IG reported that the Trust had not reviewed its VAT status for some time. When it was last looked at it was agreed that it was beneficial not to register. However the Trust's current financial activity has changed in recent years and he felt it would be prudent to review the current status to ensure that this remains the most cost effective position. The Board agreed that appropriate advice be sought and the findings reported to members.

Note JF joined the meeting during discussion of this item.

UPDATE ON SALE OF TURBINE INTEREST

This content has been withheld

COLLEGE PROJECT

JL issued a report to update members on the current position with the Old Brewery site. He advised that there had been a large amount of professional studies and surveys on the building and that he anticipates making a pre-application to NCC planning in the near future. JL gave a visual presentation on the potential design of the building and emphasised that this work was done in collaboration with the College staff and students. JL advised that the Principal of the College had left his post, one of the Vice-Principals had retired and the College's finances have been negatively impacted by changes in Apprenticeship funding. In view of this the college were carrying out a strategic review across the whole service and we have, in the interim, been asked to pause work pending completion of the review. Application has been made to the Architectural Heritage Fund for the grant funding of £20,200 they have agreed to pay.

A wide ranging debate ensued on the project with the emphasis on getting a speedy decision from the College on their involvement but, at the same time, considering what alternative uses the building could be put to. MB thought that there could be potential housing use of the site and that planning approval had been given previously for this use. The Government are to introduce a £60m Community Fund for Community Groups to develop housing projects advised that he was meeting our local MP in early June and it would be useful to explore the possibility of her championing our case for the college development.

The project remained a high profile one for the Trust and one which would have immense benefit for the town and the Board continued to be supportive of the idea. It is hoped that there will be a positive response from the college.

Note AB left the meeting during discussion of this item and Collete and David Harper joined the meeting as observers with a view to consideration as potential Trustees. They were welcomed by the Chair and gave a brief resume of their skill set.

CEO REPORT

JL advised the following items in his report

- New chairs/tables have been acquired for the William Elder Building
- The building has been revalued from £230k to £285K
- Georgie Bruce remains off work and the position is being kept under close review
- The Barracks project partners have made an application to the Coastal Communities Fund for a refit of part of the premises with a view to making wider funding applications for the development of the site
- Four applications have been submitted on behalf of Berwick to the Coastal Communities Fund and decisions are expected in June.
- An audit of current systems/procedure is underway to ensure compliance with GDPR with appropriate refinements to systems/procedures being made where necessary. It was suggested the key data is around the retention of documents and also the necessity and method of holding names and addresses.
- The Here For You project has received some funding from Bernicia to support employability work. The service now again takes referrals from DWP with a view to putting ourselves in a good bargaining position for future funding from this source.

- The supporting families contract has now been ended by NCC and Cindy Davie has left our employment
- Initial enquiries have been made with NCC regarding a development on the Quayside of retail pods similar to the venture at Amble. An investment of around £200k could produce potential income of £40k per annum. The idea will continue to be researched and reported back to a future meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The timing of the issue of papers for the Board meeting was raised and it was agreed that the minutes would be issued as soon as they had been produced and that papers for the subsequent Board meeting could be drip fed as opposed to being issued in one batch.

ID raised the question of Berwick Market and the fact that for many years it had been in decline. He also believed there were some ongoing issues around its current operation. He felt that it would be worth the Trust having a look at how it operates and whether there is any benefit in the Trust being involved in its operation. There is potential for substantial income to be generated. It was agreed that the idea would be explored with the Freemen Trustees agent and reported back. It was noted that there is an expectation that the key to a successful market is the food offer.

The next meeting was agreed for 9th July (subsequently changed to 16th July) commencing at 6-00pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7-20pm

Outstanding Actions from the Meeting

- 1) Revised budget for 2018 to be produced – IG
- 2) Review of the VAT status of the Trust be carried out – IG
- 3) An audit of the 2017 accounts be arranged - IG
- 4) Capital Budget for 2018 to be produced – IG/JL
- 5) Finalise the revised Core Legacy Fund – JL
- 6) Explore the potential involvement of the Trust in Berwick Market - JL
- 7) Updated Strategy Plan needs produced – JL (from Jan 2018 meeting)
- 8) The Risk Register needs reviewed – JL (from Jan 2018 meeting)