



MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE FRESHWATER PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 14th NOVEMBER 2017 AT 10.30 AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE MEMORIAL HALL

PRESENT: Councillors: G Kennett MBE (Chair), Anne Bamford, C Fleury, D James, D Eccles, C Bray, M Wheeler, G Cameron, T Nicholson, V Lowthion and B Hinton.

ABSENT: Cllr A Harris.

Also present: S Blamire

Clerk: M J Mills

1. APOLOGIES.

Cllr B Hobbs

2. FRESHWATER LIBRARY– PROPOSED EXTENSION AND ALTERATION.

a) To consider and if appropriate to approve the draft bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund

b) To consider the Parish Council’s financial commitment to the project including any commitment to meeting increased expenditure at the Library following completion of the proposed development.

Cllr Eccles and Fleury expressed concern at the lateness of circulation of the paperwork relating to the proposed bid. Cllr Hinton suggested that in view of that there should be a general discussion but that it would be inappropriate to make a decision. Cllr Hinton went on to say that he wanted the project to succeed and that the best person was taking it forward. Steve Blamire gave details of the background to the bid. Funding was mostly available to charities but the Heritage Lottery fund was available to local authorities.

Steve said that the project put the needs of the archive group first then the Friends of Freshwater Library and Freshwater Parish Council. He had spoken with the Lottery and the bid needed to be focused on people and outcomes. The archive group needed space and that need would continue to grow. The Lottery were quite specific that the material needed to be digitised. The concern was whether it was a broad enough audience.

Steve had also met with Townsweb.

The exhibition space would be very flexible with panels which could be moved for different events.

Cllr James referred to the Sports Centre, the Memorial Hall and the Avenues and said that he felt better use could be made of existing underused space. He was concerned that the Council might be overextended on capital and revenue as a result of the project. The Chair said that the Sports Centre had in fact run out of space and Cllr Bamford said the capacity of the Memorial Hall was reducing.

Cllr Eccles referred to the West Wight Landscape Partnership and their lottery funding of £2.5 million.

Steve said that the problem had been that the main project which was the Newport to Freshwater cycleway had not been achievable at the time so there followed a lack of focus.

Steve went on to say that the Lottery had a pot of £3.5 million available every 4 months. It was a question of pitching for that. A decision would be made in February 2018. Thereafter there would need to be consultation. Work could commence in Spring 2019 and the building could be in use by Autumn 2019.

In answer to a question on figures Steve said that administration had been put in at £150 per day for 20 days per year.

Cllr Eccles said that the name “Freshwater Library” suggested a focus on Freshwater and there should be contributions from others.

Cllr Wheeler said that the name was to be agreed. Others had been approached and it was hoped that this would be all embracing.

Cllr Hinton pointed out that the Isle of Wight Council had changed the name when they took it over and that it had originally been funded by the Seely family.

Cllr James pointed out the requirement for 40 volunteers and suggested that there was no certainty that that number of people would be available. The Chair said that Carisbrooke Castle relied heavily on volunteers and there was a lot of interest in people tracing their background.

Cllr Hinton suggested that it would be useful to define the West Wight ie west of the Yar or west of Newport.

Cllr Eccles said that this was an expensive project which could put the Council in debt for the next 25 years.

Steve said that a coffee bar could be added but he did not want to affect the café at the Sports Centre which was successful. There was potential for some income which could support exhibitions.

Cllr James pointed out that the project did not appear to be generating any employment. The Chair mentioned that the archive group had no space to work. They had been offered use of the Tennyson Suite.

Cllr James felt that more could be got from existing properties.

Cllr Lowthion was concerned about committing this amount of money to one project.

(Cllr Cameron had to leave the meeting at this point).

Cllr Nicholson also felt that it was a lot of money and there was a need to justify it.

Cllr James suggested looking at other properties.

Cllr Bray said that other buildings had been considered for different uses and the cost would be £200,000 minimum to buy and renovate.

Cllr James said that flexibility was important. If the project went ahead at the Library the Parish Council would be tied to the costs for the lifetime of the building.

Cllr Bray said that the Library was open at convenient times so would be economic from that point of view.

Steve Blamire said the Library was the best option from the grant point of view.

Cllr Fleury said that the interest rate on a public works board loan was currently 2.63%.

The Chair asked Councillors if they were happy to vote on the issue given the shortage of time to consider the paperwork. It was agreed that there should be a vote and item (a) was agreed by 7 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

Cllr Fleury suggested that item (b) should be postponed and this was agreed by all.

Cllr Wheeler thanked Steve Blamire for his work.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am.