

Minutes of the The Oldway Mansion and Grounds Steering Group (Working Party)

14 February 2022

-: Present :-

Kevin Mowat, Councillor Darren Cowell, Councillor John Thomas and Councillor Swithin Long

(Also in attendance: Councillor Cat Johns, Councillor Margaret Douglas-Dunbar, Councillor Chris Lewis, Councillor Mike Morey, Councillor David Thomas, Jo Jones, Iris Butler, Tim Eley, Louise Gilson, Paul Hawthorne, Colleen Moon, Chris Robson, Lorraine Stewart, Anna Tolchard, Kathy Hughes, David Blanchard, Christine Child, Pete Welsby and Yvette Ball)

309. Minutes

All agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the last meeting.

310. Matters Arising

Nothing to be discussed.

311. Budget

KM provided an update on the current budget situation. There is currently £21k remaining in the budget but there are no guarantees that we won't have further maintenance issues between now and March due to bad weather.

It was agreed that KM would work with Joe While to update the relevant budget lines to ensure that they accurately reflect the correct budget for this year as some are showing underspend and overspend. ACTION – KM & JW

KM updated that he has created an Oldway Maintenance officers Group with TC and TDA colleagues to discuss the various day to day maintenance issues that are happening on the building and will escalate significant matters to the working party.

David Blanchard from TDA joined the meeting and provided an update on the maintenance issues in the main building.

KM advised that before any significant maintenance action is agreed, he will bring the matter to this meeting for discussion. However, if there are any serious risks that need immediate action, KM will authorise, and an email update will be sent accordingly.

All agreed that the main priority is ensuring the health and safety of any visitors to the building and the estate.

312. Trust Update - Resilience funding - next steps

PH updated to all that the resilience funding has now been confirmed as successful application. This will assist to take forward the governance and the appointment of the Project Director for Oldway.

PH advised that he has been working on a funding bid for the preparation of a Conservation Management plan for the gardens and this should be agreed to start for April. CR commented that when the Project Director is appointed, they will be asked to commence work on the preparation of a Conservation Management plan for the buildings.

DC updated that the governance work and appointment of the Project Director should take place within the next 4 – 6 weeks. The proposed salary is £36k over 3 days a week. It is not yet decided as to the process of how the Project Director will be appointed.

A long conversation was raised over the garden conservation management plan and PW raised that there was no consultation taken with TE from Gardens group. PH advised that the funding bid paperwork was consulted on twice with the various groups and the bid has been created in conjunction with Historic England and Devon Gardens Trust. This is just the Trust commissioning this piece of work. PH reiterated that the gardens group has been consulted with and will be involved in the ongoing process of developing a conservation management plan, when this works actually commences.

CR and CL both commented that they do not believe that the amount allocated to the Project Director is enough and CR suggested that there should be a consultancy company that is appointed that can provide a full-time consultant to carry out the work and the necessary experience. DC observed that the suggested duration of 3 days a week was suggested in the brief provided by DCA. KM confirmed that the available budget could be topped up through the contingency element of the bid or by other means.

313. Friends of Oldway Group update

KH commented that there has been a lot of positive feedback received from visitors over the resilience funding award.

A draft copy of the financial accounts up until 31st December 2021 have been produced for the tearooms.

The vandalism has decreased within the grounds over the last few months. There are contractors on site at present to repair the roof in the tea rooms due to water ingress.

KH updated that she has been having conversations with the Charities commission over the tea rooms status due to the profit that was made in 2021 and this is still being reviewed.

PH commented that the Picture House Trust would like to work with the various groups about proposed cinema events being held within the Grounds.

KH updated all that she has submitted proposals for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations to Torbay Council's Events team.

314. Oldway Gardens Group Update

TE provided an update of the recent works that have been carried out in the gardens.

There is still a good number of volunteers that are working within the gardens and all work to a maintenance schedule.

TE asked if it would be possible for the Westcountry Tour Guides to be provided with a tour of the mansion along with a tour of the gardens. KM commented that this can be agreed and the detail of the request needs to be sent to KM via LS for approval. ACTION – TE

4000 bulbs have been planted within the gardens which are now starting to flower.

PW provided an update on the volunteers. They are of various ages between 20 to 80 and some volunteers who have various health issues. JJ commented that some of the volunteers have observed that the volunteering opportunities are helping them with their mental health. Some of the volunteer's hours are provided via the community payback scheme at the weekends.

315. AOB

KM updated all that there has been an enquiry received from the Agatha Christie Festival who wish to use the grounds to hold events during the 9th to 17th September. PH commented that there could be a clash with the Picture House Trust film festival. LS can send to PH the details of the enquiry that we have received. ACTION – LS

DC advised that the next meeting date is 11th April unless there is a need for an urgent meeting in which case an urgent meeting will be organised by KM/LS.