

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

24 August 2022

-: Present :-

Kevin Mowat, Councillor Darren Cowell, Councillor Cat Johns and Councillor Jane Barnby

(Also in attendance: Jo Jones, Iris Butler, Louise Gilson, Paul Hawthorne, Colleen Moon, Chris Robson, Lorraine Stewart, Anna Tolchard, Kathy Hughes, Mary Jenkins, Councillor Anne Brooks, Councillor Cecilia Brown, Yvette Ball, Emma Falconer and Jacob Brandon, David Blanchard and Peter Welsby)

Apologies received from: Swithin Long, Katherine Findlay, Joe While, Tim Eley and Sue Saunders

332. Minutes

All agreed that the minutes from the last meeting held on 13 June 2022 were an accurate record of the last meeting.

333. Matters Arising

Covered in the agenda.

334. Budget

KM displayed the budget spreadsheet on the screen and ran through the highlights of the budget report.

The significant budget spends are mainly the security costs and professional fees. The Oldway Project Director costs are showing on the budget spreadsheet but will be reclaimed through NHLF when the funding is received. KM advised that there is going to be an overspend due to the unforeseen security costs.

KM advised that there is a downward variance for NNDR that he will investigate with finance colleagues and update at the next meeting – Action – KM/JW

KM updated that the Council are still in discussion with their insurers with regards to the security cover required for Oldway. If security cover has to continue, the overspend within the Oldway budget will increase further.

335. Project Director Update

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Katherine Findlay is on annual leave and has provided a written report for today's meeting. KM read out the update report.

Most of the work so far has been concerned with developing briefs for four key contracts. These are now going through the procurement process and will go out to tender very shortly. These include –

- Masterplan
- Conservation management plans
- Business plan
- Project evaluation

KF has been researching inspiring and useful examples of similar restoration and re-use projects in the UK and has benefited from a visit to Newton's Place and meetings with senior staff at Delapre Abbey in Northamptonshire and Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. Visits to Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings and Durlston Country Park near Swanage have been arranged for the Autumn.

KF held a positive meeting with the Victorian Society, who have previously not been engaged with Oldway. The VS is the statutory consultee for buildings of this age and an effective advocate for them on the national stage, and they are now very supportive of the project. With funding from the project, DCA Consultants completed a skills mapping exercise that will help to inform the future development of the Oldway Trust board.

KF has supported the Oldway Trust to join the Heritage Trust Network, a national resources, networking and training body for trusts that care for historic buildings. It has already proved to be a valuable source of knowledge and contacts.

Project management systems have been set up and a project board established to oversee the work of KF and to take key decisions. It meets monthly and consists of representatives from Torbay Council and the Oldway Trust. Guest members are also invited from the Friends of Oldway, the Gardens Group and TDA.

A quarterly reporting schedule has been agreed with NLHF and an extension to the project has been agreed to reflect the delay in starting. The project will now run until the end of June 2023.

IB asked if it would be a good idea for one of the trustees i.e. Chris as Chair, to attend the planned visits to other buildings and organisations along with KF. KM advised he will ask KF for her thoughts on this suggestion – ACTION – LS to email KF

DC advised that KM and DC will be discussing with KF the expansion of the trustees for the Oldway Trust.

KH asked DC when the process for new Trustees applying will start as she has recently had someone enquiring. DC advised that he hopes the process will start

by end of September/October as he is aware of the importance of new Trustees being appointed including a treasurer.

KM advised that Torbay Council will be working alongside the Oldway Trust to appoint the new trustees.

DC asked where the TDA are with regards to the leases for the tea rooms and Gardens Group for using Oldway. KM advised that Paul Palmer from TDA has been looking into this.

336. Trust Update - to include a financial statement

Covered above.

337. Friends of Oldway Group update - to include a financial statement

KH provided an update from Friends of Oldway group and the tearooms. KH thanked the TDA colleagues for their assistance with erecting a tunnel for the tearooms to be able to be reopened. However, there was a delay in the fencing being put up from when KH had reported that parts of the masonry had fallen down. DC advised that this delay is being investigated.

KH advised that a large banner has been erected on the Heras fencing to advise that the Tearooms are now open.

KH advised that she had held conversations with members of the Bowling Club recently who feel that they are not kept up to date with progression for Oldway and would like to be involved. EF commented that there is a new Paignton Newsletter Update that is being sent out by email and people can sign up to subscribe for updates and EF will ensure that the link is sent out to the members of this Working Party to sign up and there will be Oldway updates included in some of the newsletters. ACTION – EF to send to LS and LS to send out to the group

KH updated the Working Party that the Tearooms will now be operated under the Oldway Trust and be separate from the Friends of Oldway. There will be 2 Directors set up for the Tearooms and then more Directors will be added after. The beneficiary for the Tearooms will be the Oldway Trust.

With regards to finance update, KH advised that there was a loss made the week that the Tearooms had to be shut due to the issues with the masonry. There are a few functions scheduled to take place soon. There are two events booked at Singer Court where the Tearooms will be providing outside catering for. KH updated that the bank balance has remained at £22k.

DC thanked KH and all the volunteers for all their hard work in the Tearooms. CR asked how quickly the repairs to the masonry can be carried out so that the Heras fencing can be removed. DB advised that he is unable to give a definitive answer to this due it being a listed building and having to take advice from relevant specialist contractors, but it is unlikely it is going to be removed in the foreseeable future. KM agreed with this and reminded all that the detail within the DCA report,

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which was written 4 years ago and prior to Covid, stated that the project would take 10 years and cost circa £25m. KM asked EF that communications are drafted for information to be sent out to update the general public of the situation. ACTION - EF

DC advised that it would be a good idea for the notice board previously discussed, to be put up which can provide information to the public to keep them up to date.

KH asked for agreement for the Friends of Oldway to purchase the notice board as previously asked. KM accepted this offer and asked that YB and EF will work together with Jim Blackwell to see where the notice board could be placed in the most efficient and acceptable way – ACTION – YB, EF & JB

338. Oldway Gardens Group Update - to include a financial statement

PW provided an update from the Gardens Group. There has been an average of 40 volunteers and 747 volunteer hours in the last month. BBC Spotlight have been filming at Oldway Gardens today and should be on the news programme this evening to promote the story of Oldway and the Gardens.

PW advised that they have also been visited recently by Alison Hernandez and some JPs to look at the work carried out within the gardens by the community payback team.

Mandy Darling, Civic Mayor today presented the winner of the Britain in Blooms competition within the gardens.

Due to the success of the sustainable plants within the gardens, there has been no need for hoses to be used.

PW advised that there is an issue with the tea hut being damaged, but it has been made safe and asked how this should be replaced. YB asked that this is reported to the TDA helpdesk. ACTION – PW

PW raised the point that the plant store has had to be moved from its current location due to the masonry falling from the colonnade. The location that the plant store has now been moved too, this has resulted in no protection for the elements being provided to the volunteers so PW and TE are asking for a further summer house/temporary building to be erected for the volunteers which can also be used as an information centre for any enquiries whilst the Heras fencing is erected. KM commented that when TE returns from leave, he would like to meet with TE onsite to discuss this issue so asked that TE email to organise. ACTION – TE/LS

DC asked if a financial update can be provided, and JJ commented that the balance currently in the bank account is £18.5k. DC asked if there are any specific projects that the funds raised are going to be used for. PW advised that there are no current plans as such but there have been some plans discussed previously but they have been keeping these plans on hold until the Project Director starts and meets with the group.

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There was a discussion about gravel being replaced within the grounds. KM advised that he will need to discuss this with KF and check what was previously agreed. ACTION – KM