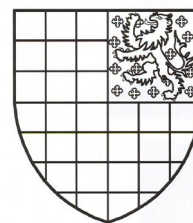


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Working Party established to oversee repairs to the Council's buildings**, held on **Thursday 23rd September 2021**, online via Zoom Meetings at 11:00am.

PRESENT Cllrs Bird; Catlin; Earl; Lamb; Dr Mayhew; Milner; and (*not appointed to the Working Party*) Cllrs Dr Maples and Sains.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*), Ms L Chrysostomou (*TC Designate*), L Symons (*Town Hall Manager*), B Courage (*Town Ranger*), Mr Ben Campbell (*Delta Green Environmental Design*)

BRepWP2021/01 ELECTION of CHAIRMAN: Cllr Dr Mayhew was elected to chair the working Party for the 2021/22 year.

BRepWP2021/02 QUESTIONS: There were none

BRepWP2021/03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr Waring, who was attending a meeting of the South Downs National Park Authority.

BRepWP2021/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none.

BRepWP2021/05 MINUTES: it was resolved that

BRepWP2021/05.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2020 are received and signed as an accurate record.

BRepWP2021/06 REMIT of the WORKING PARTY

Members noted the remit of the working Party, which is:

The Buildings Working Party is tasked with oversight of maintenance of the Town Hall; All Saints Centre, and Malling Community Centre and other buildings/ structures, meeting ad hoc. Currently mandated to administer the refurbishment of Malling Community Centre, and authorized to act for Council in that regard, the Working Party will otherwise formulate recommendations for Council as appropriate with regard to repairs; non-routine maintenance matters, or replacements/ refurbishments of major plant and equipment.

BRepWP2021/07 EXCLUSION of the PRESS & PUBLIC

At this point the Chairman moved, **and it was resolved:**

BRepWP2021/07.1 That in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted during the remainder of the meeting, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 *etc* any members of the press or public present be excluded and instructed to withdraw. The nature of that business is to consider commercially sensitive detail related to proposed works and contracts.

BRepWP2021/08 TOWN HALL HEATING SYSTEM REFURBISHMENT:

1. The meeting welcomed Ben Campbell of Delta Green Environmental Design, the Council's commissioned consultants; attending to advise.

2. Members of the working party had been furnished with a set of documents for reference and TC advised that he had originally anticipated the focus of the meeting would be a recently-arisen issue which significantly affected the project. Preliminary assessment of the electrical supply and distribution connections serving the Town Hall had established that, to serve the proposed Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP), an upgrade would be required to the buildings' main supply. This had been submitted to UK Power Networks (UKPN), who own and maintain the supply infrastructure in the South-East, and they had determined that a local substation would require an upgrade to deliver the necessary supply. The cost quoted for this was over £150,000, much of which was attributable to basic engineering work such as excavations and groundworks. Quotes had earlier been received from five potential installation contractors which were broadly in line with the expected range, but the

effect of this additional cost on the Council's project was significant, and it had been expected that the meeting would revisit the programme – TC having identified various funding options which might allow it to continue with only slight revision.

3. Air Source Heat Pumps consist of an outdoor condenser or heat exchanger unit, which extract ambient air and transfer the heat through refrigeration pipework to indoor plant. A system would be capable of providing 100% of heating demand within the building during mild temperatures (*eg* Autumn/Spring), but the flow temperatures which they generate (around 55°C) is considerably lower than required (around 80°C) to adequately 'drive' the existing internal heating system during colder periods, when the system would need topping-up by an additional boiler. As the existing heating system (cast iron radiators and distribution pipework) was to be retained, the chosen system would install a hybrid heating system, comprising an air source heat pump supplemented by gas-fired boiler plant, based upon the ASHP providing approximately 75% of the heating requirements.

4. Immediately before commencement of the meeting a further quotation had been received, in respect of the acoustic enclosure required by the proposed Air Source Heat Pump, and this was an impractically large structure and such a high cost as to completely alter the viability of the project as it currently stood. TC's advice now was that a comprehensive review of the project and the technical specification were called-for, as it now appeared that the total cost of the preferred option could be between £400,000 - 500,000.

5. Some Members robustly expressed their concern that these factors were not discovered earlier, but it was explained that this was the first practical opportunity to address the matter as necessary preliminary assessments of both the existing electrical supply system and the ambient sound levels in the area of the homes adjacent the rear yard had been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Estimates had been included for these elements, but not of the order of cost now being quoted.

6. Members, some with technical professional backgrounds, questioned the high quotations and asked if they were likely to reduce if investigated with the providers. There were elements that appeared to be open to further competition, but it was reluctantly acknowledged that there were unlikely to be significant reductions, given the nature of the industry. Mr Campbell was challenged as to whether he might have foreseen the order of costs now quoted, and he stated that this was unprecedented in his experience. The costs were not quantifiable until completion of the surveys and it was unfortunate that UKPN's infrastructure in the centre of Lewes was inadequate for this type of installation. It was an unfortunate fact that since the original project estimates were presented many elements had increased in price, but the installation contractors and machinery costs were still acceptable; what could not be foreseen was the extremely high charge for upgrading a sub-station, groundworks, and the acoustic shielding.

7. A member questioned the cost of the acoustic enclosure, citing the likely cost to build a music studio as a comparator, and Mr Campbell explained that the self-supporting structure had to allow free passage of air to the air-source heat pump yet mitigate the sound transmitted via the same air. This was a technical conundrum that required specialized materials and construction, although he had been surprised at the size of enclosure determined by the acoustic requirements, and the cost. It was noted that the surrounding area was relatively quiet for most hours of the day, which demanded more insulation, and ASHP equipment was accepted to generate low-frequency sound which 'carried' and was the most difficult to mitigate.

8. Mr Campbell confirmed that the model of ASHP was the same as originally specified, and Members were reminded that this had been selected having taken account of such factors as the ecological impact and sustainability and future availability of the refrigerant used in its operation. The original report had shown the investigation of alternative locations for the equipment, but none were feasible.

There may be alternatives worthy of consideration if the project was to be reviewed, as the industry and the relevant technologies had continued to develop rapidly over the past two years. Members suggested that separation of multiple smaller ASHP units could be feasible, or the ASHP/boiler contribution could be profiled differently, placing greater load on boilers.

9. Original estimates had anticipated a simple upgrade of cable from a local substation but the supplier needed to effectively recommission the substation. In answer to technical questions regarding the existing electrical supply capacity, Mr Campbell advised that the capacity was inadequate for most of the options considered, and modern regulations prevented many of the 'workaround' suggestions being mooted by Members. He was asked if he had ever experienced such disruption or inflation of an ASHP-focussed project, and he confirmed that this was unprecedented.

10. It was agreed that a comprehensive review of the fundamental options for a more sustainable heating system was needed, and work on the project would reluctantly be halted until that was available. There was an acknowledged risk that the single functioning boiler at the Town Hall could fail and may be irreparable, but this was unavoidable. Members noted that recent global developments suggested non-gas options might be more attractive now. Mr Campbell agreed that his company could produce a new report in 4 - 6 weeks. The Working party **agreed** that it should meet again in mid-November once this was available.

11. Mr Campbell was thanked for his report and advice, and he was invited to contact Cllr Milner if it was thought his technical input might be helpful – either his own or his professional colleagues.

BRepWP2021/09

INSURANCE RISK ASSESSMENT SURVEYS:

The meeting received reports recently submitted by Zurich Insurance Risk Engineering on the Town Hall and All Saints Centre.

These had been prepared following visits in August and September 2021 by the Council insurer's technical Risk Analyst and were comprehensive assessments of risks perceived in the buildings and operations. The surveyor's reports – intended as advisory, but ultimately relevant to an underwriter's evaluation of premium - were detailed and broadly complimentary. The executive summaries confirmed that:

In the case of the All Saints Centre – two items were noteworthy: one was classified as 'advisory' and related to the provision of a lightning conductor. This should accord with the standard BS EN 62305 - Protection against Lightning, and subject to scheduled, annual, testing and maintenance by a specialist, or suitably qualified electrical contractor. This was straightforward and should be accommodated within routine maintenance budgets.

The other was classed as 'important': the implementation of a Hot Work permit scheme. Significant fire risks are associated with hot work processes such as welding and cutting, grinding and the use of bitumen boilers - which may be undertaken in connection with structural alterations and routine maintenance work.

These risks may be further aggravated by contractors who are not familiar with the premises, and who may not be aware of the potential risks. A Hot Work Permit Scheme should control all hot work - whether done by contractors or own employees – and is fundamentally a specific project risk-assessment. The surveyor had kindly provided a template and link to Zurich's approved protocol. There was no direct cost associated with this recommendation and it would be incorporated into the building's management immediately.

The report in the Town Hall cited three 'advisory' items – lightning protection (as for All Saints); Police response to intruder alarms (not available in this area – our alarms are monitored by the system provider); review of Fire Risk Assessments (to be scheduled). Four 'important' notes were:

A Hot Work certification protocol (as for All Saints); regular inspection and cleaning

of kitchen extraction ducting (could be included with existing service contractor); electrical installation minor defects (previously identified by our own electrical contractor and scheduled for repair/replacement) and the need for a Rebuilding Cost survey for insurance purposes (not done since purchase of the building in 1998/9). This last would require a Chartered Surveyor to be commissioned specifically, as the present Building Sum Insured may not reflect the current rebuilding costs, having risen annually according to a theoretical formula.

BRepWP2021/10 GENERAL DISCUSSION:

A question arose as to maintenance of box-tombs in the churchyard of the All Saints Centre, showing encroachment of ivy and couch-grass. It was believed that Lewes District Council had commissioned a survey of repairs needed but no work was apparent. TC recounted the principle of responsibility for maintenance of a closed churchyard (distinguished from de-consecration) and the fact that the responsibility had been passed-on to the District Council under statutory provisions in the early 1980's. The Town Ranger would enquire of District Council officers regarding the position.

BRepWP2021/11 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Working party would recommend to Council that the Town Hall heating project be put on-hold and revisited in light of the unforeseen cost implications described above.

Further, it would recommend that Chartered Surveyors be sought and asked to quote for a valuation of the Town Hall rebuilding cost of for insurance purposes.

BRepWP2021/12 There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, and thanked everyone for their attendance. *The meeting closed at 12:45pm.*

Signed date.....