

ST GEORGE'S GUILDHALL & CREATIVE HUB ADVISORY GROUP

Notes of Meeting

Date	14 May 2021	Location	Remotely via Microsoft Teams
Time	2.30pm	Chair	Michael Baldwin

Overview: This was a second positive meeting of the group, the exchange of ideas and questions thrown up only help to move the project forward.

Agenda
1. Introductions
2. Apologies noted from Jemma Curtis, Mary Muir and Harry Seaton
3. Minutes of the last meeting of 16th April 2021 (attached). The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.
4. Update on Stakeholder & Community Group meeting and issues flowing from that. MB updated the advisory group on the Wednesday meeting of the Stakeholder group. They had been given a presentation from the people who did the creative hub work. MB stated that this original work did not include the Guildhall part of the site. The Advisory Group noted that integrating the two parts of the site into one overall holistic vision was now imperative. There were further questions raised by the stakeholder group. MB is to collate and circulate these to the advisory group. DH suggested sharing Marion Catlin's presentation slides which the advisory group thought would be most helpful. It was understood that broadly there was support in the stakeholder group for including the white barn and annex in the site vision which the advisory group supported. DH said there was vocal support from the stakeholder group for an idea initially begun by a member of the advisory board to ensure partnerships with educational institutions and what they referred to as 'the 3 rd sector'. The advisory board again endorsed this. There were apparently issues with people being free to attend the stakeholder group. There was a suggestion that perhaps the timetabling of their meetings could be more flexible. The advisory board endorsed this. The advisory board raised a useful point that one obvious reason

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for integrating the white barn suggested plans with the site as a whole could be expressed in that 'if you have one coffee shop in the guildhall complex you don't necessarily want one in the white barn.' The broader point being that linked up thinking, holistic road to river management, leads to minimising inefficiency and maximising cost savings. This led to a broader discussion on the expectation of financial outcome. What financially does the Brough want to achieve with the site? DH and LN were very helpful in giving the historical issues and clarity that the Borough must not repeat this. Management of the site by a CIO or other mechanism would be intended to achieve zero liability to the taxpayer. The advisory group noted that economic sustainability was key to the success of any bid suggested and that any bids must be made in full knowledge of the post-COVID environment. The group heard quoted the tourism figures regarding Cambridge: 8.1 Million visitors per year (pre-COVID) bringing in around £830 million and accounting for approx. 20% of local employment. The group noted that Kings Lynn was only 50 minutes by train from Cambridge. The group advised robust analysis and financial planning was needed but is also aware of clear potential. Critical to any bid would be economic stability but also organisational sustainability of the site. The group acknowledged that this had been a weakness to date and re-iterated its clear recommendation to remedy this and hoped this may be achieved as soon as possible so it could be included in any bid. A note of caution needed to be sounded following the Bryn Jones documents. However, the group also noted he was not briefed to include the full range of opportunities the site now presented. The group felt that we should challenge ourselves on the use of all parts of the existing complex but with the Guildhall Theatre and its history being retained and put front and centre of this thinking. The group suggested the stakeholder group be asked to engage in new thinking the regarding site usage and looked forward to hearing their thoughts.

- 5. Formation of CIO (or other form of management entity) and any steps needing support or advice – does the council need support?** Positive discussions have taken place at KLWNBC regarding this and now a briefing document is required to understand the best mechanism. Further work is taking place as to the proper process required to establish this. The group were clear a timeline for this work is vital at this stage. There was a discussion regarding whether any existing group eg Alive West Norfolk could simply take on the Guildhall site. The group re-iterated its advice that a bespoke entity is required

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to manage the site from road to river constituted holistically. The financial logistics of how this might fit into the Town Fund Announcement was then discussed and was positive and again emphasised the need for a time frame on finding a solution to the management entity. No money can be spent from a successful town bid until a business plan has been approved. Part of the business plan is organisational stability. The BC would resource this business plan being green book compliant. The NT offered to assist with resources to support creating a timeline when the moment was appropriate and the advisory board noted this with thanks. Any management entity would need to be NT approved and this will also take time. The advisory board were told the BC were meeting with various stakeholders to emphasise their commitment to establishing a bespoke management entity for the site and this would be made clear to all stakeholders to avoid any potential confusion. The BC and NT were of one mind that the management entity be it CIO, CIC or Ltd Company would need careful crafting from its foundation to give it the best chance of success and longevity. The group as whole offered to assist with this. DH and LN are to establish procedure and timeline from a BC perspective. It was felt that a presentation by the advisory board at the relevant time would be helpful. The advisory board agreed to assist with this. TF, MB and PW agreed to create a briefing document on the various options before the BC to assist decision making. RH also volunteered to assist with this work.

- 6. HLF EOI –** The advisory board felt early engagement with NHLF was a good course of action. Engagement prior to a EIO was felt to be good. However, it was felt that there are fundamental questions that still require firm answers before we are ready even for this initial engagement. These are questions surrounding site governance, sustainability and stakeholders. A dialogue with the NHLF regarding the failed bid would also be of significant use. The group felt the need to address the reasons for failure head on would give the best chance of future success: emphasis on what is new would be key. A tighter, more focused and clearer vision was vital. Various people have volunteered to assist with this process once these questions have been answered and the EIO and business plan are in a position to be critically evaluated prior to any bid. The NT offered their fundraising team to critically evaluate in a positive way any business plan. This team is known to many in the group and given their considerable experience the group felt this was a very helpful offer. The group looked at the issue of linking the white barn and guildhall parts of the site and made positive suggestions as to how to achieve this.

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7. **Creative Hub / Community Renewal Fund Update** – Mary Muir was absent. However, DH presented a view around CRF and its history. A joint application had been made by Kings Lynn, Norwich and Great Yarmouth and if successful some this money could be used for projects on the Guildhall site. The group noted this and welcomed it. The group would welcome suggestions from residents and stakeholders regarding what they wanted to see on the site. It will only help the process if opinion is canvassed as widely as possible in the town and borough. Perhaps a question like: given the objective of everyone is to see a vibrant and commercially successful Guildhall site, including the white barn and annex in the historic quarter of Kings Lynn, in an ideal world what would you like to see happening there? Answers to a question like this would be very helpful for everyone going forward and perhaps the stakeholder group and residents might engage with this. RC RH MB TF would all be available to help refine a better wording for this question. We must obviously keep in mind the stipulations of the NT lease for the parts of the site affected by this (performance in the theatrical part for example). The advisory board resolved going forward that hybrid zoom and in person meetings were entirely acceptable.

8. **Towns Fund Business Case resourcing** The BC would be engaging a procurement specialist for this and a programme manager for the town. There appeared to be a potential synergy with NMM and DH and RH are to discuss this. The announcement of the TF is likely to be on the 24th May. The advisory board offered to support this work.

9. **Any other business** – The board were very pleased to hear about the already existing involvement of Historic England through Hettie Thornton. She is known to many members of the advisory group who all spoke highly of her. The advisory group felt that when plans had moved to an appropriate stage Hettie and the involvement of HE was critical and looked forward to working with her and her team.

10. The group formally accepted that hybrid virtual and face to face meetings are acceptable for this body going forward.

11. **Date of Next Meeting – 3rd June 2.30pm**

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Any questions or queries relating to the group or project please email: visionkl@west-norfolk.gov.uk

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