

GRASSINGTON DEVONSHIRE INSTITUTE
(A Charitable Incorporated Organisation – Registered Charity no. 1185815)

TRUSTEES

NOTES OF A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17th JUNE 2020

Participants: David Wood (in the Chair)
Hanne Barton Barrie Doyle
Marion Field Stephen Parry
Jean Slater

In attendance Penny Clover (Treasurer)

1. Notes of previous meetings

The notes of the meetings held on 9th March, 11th May (via 'Zoom') and 26th May 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. Progress report - Repairs to/replacement of the fly gallery (Main Hall stage)

Significant progress had been made with the project. The stage area had been fully dismantled and all loose plasterwork (including all plasterwork on the rear wall down to 4 metres) had been removed. The new supporting steelwork had been delivered and was safely installed by 'Team M' (the Town Hall's team of volunteers). An invoice for the steelwork (value £1,950) had been paid. Spot On Theatre Services would attend imminently to commence electrical and other work. The proposed stage lighting system would follow in the coming weeks, after specifications were checked by Mr Jameson.

Trustees were pleased to hear that an agreement had been reached to fix the three lighting bars in a permanent position, which avoided the need for winches to be relocated. Fixing the bars would reduce wear on cabling and avoid the need for annual testing. A supplementary lighting bar would be made available which would allow angle changes for specific productions. The left fly gallery would be retained for maintenance only as inspection would be required of the wall in the top left corner of the stage. Cracking had been filled, but it would require an annual inspection. Specific controls would be in place to ensure there was no unauthorised or inappropriate access to the retained gallery, although it was noted that no stage-related equipment would be supported or tied off onto this gallery. The structural engineer had confirmed that this would be acceptable.

Consultation with user groups had confirmed that back cloths would be drawn across the stage (horizontally) in future and two would be provided along with a new, white background which could be used to project images from the front of the stage.

Now that the main dismantling part of the project had been completed, the stage would be screened off from any potential users of the hall (although it was noted that the building remained closed to the public for the foreseeable future).

Consideration would be given to the installation of an access ramp to the right-hand side of the stage (accessible via the side door from the Octagon corridor).

Some of the old curtaining in the hall would be cleaned and re-hung on new curtain tracks but the main stage (front) curtains would be replaced. The existing curtains had been placed on Ebay and had attracted offers (*net profit on sale subsequently was £135*). It was felt that the new curtains might prove to be an attractive subject to discuss funding via third parties and it was agreed that one such option (details to be disclosed at a later date) would be pursued. Fire retardancy of existing curtains had been tested and found to be satisfactory.

A vote of thanks to the members of Team M was unanimously given.

Action – Mr Doyle to continue to provide updates regarding the progress of the project.

3. Asbestos Survey

An asbestos survey report had now been received and this had confirmed that no asbestos had been found. Whilst this was good news, a number of inaccessible areas and voids had not been inspected but as long as these areas are not disturbed in the future, no action will need to be taken.

Action – Mr Wood to inform Grassington Parish Council of the outcome of the survey.

4. Finances

The Treasurer reported that three of the outstanding bills had been paid but some remained outstanding, despite a number of reminders. Reluctantly, Trustees agreed that individuals or organisations whose debts remained despite the reminders given would not be able to book or hire any Town Hall facilities until such time as the relevant invoice(s) were settled in full.

A financial forecast for the year, based on a 'worst case' scenario, suggested that the GDI was heading for a deficit in year of between £16,000 and £17,000. The only income guaranteed over the coming months was that related to the Government's Job Retention Scheme, against which the Caretakers were currently furloughed. It was noted however that after taking account of the requirement to retain 50% of annual operating costs in reserve, liquidity of around £54,000 would allow GDI to continue to function and to continue to make improvements for members and customers.

5. Potential use of the Town Hall

Grassington Parish Council had contacted GDI about the potential for the Town Hall to be offered as educational space to local schools when they re-opened (probably from September). An approach had been made to the relevant Head Teachers and responses had indicated that whilst there may be some interest at some stage, there was insufficient information in place from the Government to be able to make any firm plans at this stage. A contact had been received from an individual who may be interested in establishing a playgroup but the contact had been informed of the current position regarding the Dales Playschool and advised to make contact with them. Trustees considered the circumstances under which the building could be re-opened, bearing in mind the rules on gatherings and requirements for social distancing. Guidance issued in relation to churches was referenced, which appeared very complex. With due regard to the current circumstances and the opportunity for ongoing work to be carried out whilst the building was closed, Trustees agreed that the Town Hall should remain closed to the public until 31st August 2020, to be reviewed in the light of new guidance.

6. Caretakers

Given the decision reached regarding the ongoing closure, it was agreed that the Caretakers should remain on furlough, receiving 100% of 'normal' salary, until 31st August 2020. This situation would be kept under review.

Action – The Treasurer to continue to submit claims under the Government's Job Retention Scheme up to and including 31st August 2020. Mr Wood to confirm the action with the two Caretakers.

7. Membership

Following contact with the existing participants in the Lucky Dip Draw, 29 people had now become members of the GDI, paying £2 per month from 1st June 2020 (a figure to be reviewed in time for January 2021). It was agreed that until a programme of events could be advertised and the Town Hall re-opened, the Membership Scheme would not be publicised, although work on the logo and format of the leaflet would continue.

8. Lucky Dip Draw

The Lucky Dip now had 40 members. The Draw for June was won by Bob Kendall (No. 22) who receives the new prize of £50.

9. Potential Re-development of the Town hall

Given the potential to attract external funding for improvement schemes, Trustees considered some proposals for future developments. The first of these was to convert the Dales Playschool area into a two-bedroomed flat, which could accommodate the resident Caretaker. Subject to agreement, it was felt

the Town Hall could be a much more marketable commodity if the whole of the ground floor of the front of the building could be utilised, for example by a new Hub and Library and 'pay for use' public toilets, which would contribute useful revenue. Other than this, an improvement to the bar and foyer area would enhance customer experience and allow the bar to be less reliant on equipment housed in the kitchen. A 'sluice' room could be added under the new bar area and double doors from the entrance would reduce the problem with draughts in the foyer. Finally, a new external walkway to the Octagon could provide much-improved access to those customers with mobility problems. Trustees considered the issues relating to these schemes, including the potential for planning consent to be obtained. Given the position regarding building ownership and the lack of a formal lease, it was noted that Grassington Parish Council's support for a number of these proposals would be essential. It was agreed that the current Caretaker should be made aware, without any absolute guarantees, about the proposal for the new flat and that GPC should be contacted thereafter.

Action – Mr Doyle to speak with the Caretaker and, assuming there was interest in the idea, Mr Wood to speak with Councillor Charlton.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Given the current pace of progress with the stage project and the changing situation with regard to coronavirus regulations, it was agreed to call a meeting as necessary rather than to set a date at this stage.

DPW 19th June 2020.