

TRURO CITY COUNCIL



CITY OF TRURO

Town Clerks Department
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Minutes from the meeting of the Accommodation Working Group held Monday 23 September 2024 at 1900 in the Training Room, First Floor, Truro Public Library, Union Place, TR1 1EP

PRESENT Councillors Wells (in the chair), Swain (Mayor), Rabey (Deputy Mayor), and Eathorne Gibbons.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE Councillor LaBorde and David Rodda MBE (Town Clerk).

APOLOGIES Councillors Unwin and Webb – personal.

1 ELECT A CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Eathorne-Gibbons, seconded by Councillor Swain and **RESOLVED** that Councillor Wells be elected Chairman of the Accommodation Working Group.

A/24/516

2 COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

The apologies received were **noted**.

A/24/517

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

A/24/518

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Eathorne-Gibbons and **RESOLVED** to amend the draft terms of reference membership from '7' to '8' in 3.b).

A/24/519

It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Swain and **RESOLVED** to amend the draft terms of reference so that 4.a) reads "*It will hold a meeting as required.*"

A/24/520

It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Rabey and **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council that the draft terms of reference as amended be ratified.

The Chairman requested this be added, for reporting, to the next Full Council agenda due to the time constraints of the working group in addition to the resolving on the election of members to the vacancies.

A/24/521

5 ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Eathorne-Gibbons, seconded by Councillor Wells and **RESOLVED** that Councillor Rabey be elected Vice-Chairman of the Accommodation Working Group.

A/24/522

6 MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Swain, seconded by Councillor Rabey and **RESOLVED** that the minutes from the last meeting were a correct record.

A/24/523

- a The Town Clerk started his report on the current status of the Municipal Buildings by informing members that there had been numerous handover dates given by Cornwall Council (CC) that had all been superseded; there was due to be a meeting later in the week with Cornwall Council and the contractor with the aim of bringing the contract to a close. However, there was a clear gap between the what the contractor and Cornwall Council thinks is the end and what Truro City Council (TCC) believe is the end.

The Town Clerk then gave an update on the works being undertaken by Cornwall Council as summarised:

1. The main office had been cleaned and repainted.
2. Richard Budge's office, used as storage, is full.
3. The Town Clerk's office is condemned due to fire risk and has holes as a result of the scaffolding placement.
4. The roof lights are now fixed and so shouldn't leak (maintenance responsibility of these rests with Cornwall Council as there is a specific clause in the lease agreement that specifies that these are not the responsibility of TCC).
5. Clock tower is fully repaired.
6. Mansafe for the roof is not yet in place. A member raised that there was planning permission for a railing/mansafe.
7. The Mayor's Parlour is mostly in its original condition.
8. The roof leak and plaster had been repaired in the council chamber as well as having a repaint. There is no sign of damp.
9. The committee chamber is as it was. The carpet was left down and covered. A member asked if a deep clean was due, to which the Town Clerk confirmed that Cornwall Council has agreed to undertake that for the entire building but this has yet to be delivered.
10. Foyer is repaired and repainted with the rest having a mist coat of paint; carpet due to be replaced.
11. Town Hall full of furniture; as no dust sheets had been used it is in need of cleaning.
12. The hot water boiler in the kitchen had been replaced but this doesn't look as though it had been done to code.
13. The toilets were serviceable.

Following this it was reported that the key issue was that there needed to be a conclusion to the discussions relating to the gap between the contractor and CC. This had been acknowledged by CC but funding for this is unknown at this time.

In addition to this, it was made clear to members that at such time TCC regains control of the building it will not be in a position to use until the fire extinguishers are replaced, emergency signs installed, security ensured and necessary testing carried out.

The Town Clerk then detailed that at present the Hall for Cornwall pays for the water rates, CC reimburses TCC for the electric and business rates. However, these will fall to TCC on handover. These costs would be incurred during repair works without any income to offset.

CC understands that TCC cannot pay its £1.3million bill in one go and is considering options for a repayment plan which is likely to take the form of a low-interest rate loan over 25 years. Any outstanding repair costs could be taken off this bill to reduce it and that is something that will be considered by Cornwall Council in the on-going discussions.

- b** The Town Clerk asked the group to consider whether the buildings should be mothballed whilst further investigations are undertaken or whether investment to meet the minimum standards for use should be undertaken so that the rooms can be used for hire. The budget for 2024/25 was reported to be £47,000 as well as the £80,000 that had been allocated to the first loan payment, now unlikely to be needed this year as the repayment plan would begin in April 2025.

Discussions then ensued questioning the reasons for returning, what burden might this put on the budget and the balance between the civic/historic motivation as well as the financial viability. It was also considered that the current working offices of the TCC were a factor as a use for those would have to be found if we vacated them.

The potential exclusive hire terms was discussed with the earning potential of the rooms at the library considered greater.

It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Eathorne-Gibbons and **RECOMMENDED** that Truro City Council do not mothball the Municipal Buildings and agree in principle with the reoperation of the council chamber and exploration of possible income generating uses to minimise the costs incurred making the site safe.

A/24/526

- c** The group members agreed that options for next steps must be; in the long term an assessment of all TCC's sites and a five-year business plan that is ambitious without overburdening the residents of Truro; in the medium term get to a point of income generation; in the short term resolve the gap in handover repairment.

A/24/527

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the Town Clerk call the next meeting when appropriate and that a tour of the Municipal Buildings by the working group be conducted on 21st October.

A/24/528

The meeting closed at 2016.