

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the CHAMBERS
INSTITUTION TRUST held in Council
Chamber, Rosetta Road, Peebles on
Wednesday, 2nd March, 2016 at 4.15 pm

Present:- Councillors W. Archibald, K. Cockburn, G. H. T. Garvie (from para 2),
G. Logan

Apologies:- Councillors S. Bell, C. Bhatia, V. Davidson

In Attendance:- Una Richards, Director and Audrey Dakin, Project Officer, Scottish Historic
Buildings Trust (SHBT).

1. **MINUTE OF THE MEETING**

The Minute of Meeting of the Chambers Institution Trust of 31 August 2015 had been circulated.

**DECISION
APPROVED.**

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of Meeting held on 31 August 2015, Councillor Logan proposed that in the absence of the Chairman at any future meeting, Members appoint a Vice-Chairman at that time.

**DECISION
AGREED that in the absence of the Chairman at any future meeting, Members
appoint a Vice-Chairman at that time.**

MEMBER

Councillor Garvie joined the meeting.

3. **PRESENTATION - CONSULTATION PROCESS**

3.1 Una Richards, Director, Scottish Historic Buildings Trust advised that the consultation process in respect of the Chambers Institution, Peebles had been concluded. A paper had been previously circulated advising that 208 questionnaire responses had been submitted, a further 173 additional people attended the stakeholder workshops, giving an overall total of 381 people involved in the consultation. An analysis of the questionnaire indicated that:-

- (a) the building was highly valued by the local Community and there was strong support for it to remain a building for Community use and one where the Community came first.
- (b) the majority of respondents also identified that there was a need for change at the building including upgrading of access, facilities and services, more investment in maintenance and for innovation and revitalisation of some of the existing services housed in the building. There was general acknowledgement that this would require a re-ordering of the layout of the building, especially to improve access to those parts of the building most used by the Community, although opinions varied as to the scale of the re-ordering exercise needed.

- (c) Peebles Library was the most regularly visited space in the Chambers Institution, and was identified as the anchor use within the building. The other spaces most regularly used by the community were the Burgh Hall, the Tweeddale Museum and Art Gallery and the courtyard. The inclusion of a variety of uses within the building was viewed as positive, helping to increase vibrancy of the building.
- (d) of all the important spaces in the building, the Burgh Hall was identified as the one most clearly underperforming currently and consequently the one with most scope for increasing its relevance to the community and intensifying its usage. A wide range of preferences for use of this space and a variety of proposals for increasing floor area through the introduction of another floor or gallery at high level were expressed.
- (e) some challenges were identified by the Community. A more user-friendly booking facility for the Burgh Hall was suggested, plus it was noted that the uncertainty over who was responsible for management and decision-making – the Chambers Institution Trust, Scottish Borders Council or the new Sport and Culture Trust – was unhelpful in terms of retaining and building ongoing Community support for the building.

3.2 An analysis of the stakeholder workshop responses were as follows:-

- (a) there was general support for the library to have ground floor space, as a means both to improve access to this service and to provide a welcoming entrance to the building and gateway to other uses housed there.
- (b) more flexible accommodation in the building was desired, in particular in relation to removing the fixed staging in the Burgh Hall and providing more smaller meeting or breakout spaces.
- (c) there was a strong desire to promote use of the building by young people and for education.
- (d) there was an appetite for closer collaboration between the uses in the building e.g. the Tweeddale Museum and the John Buchan Story. Individual comments on the use of space showed the community exploring how a re-ordering exercise for the building could help promote this collaboration by ensuring uses with greater synergy were located near to each other.
- (e) the cost of hiring the Chambers Institution should be affordable for the local Community.
- (f) there was also recognition that Peebles was generally well served with community halls, and that any decision on the future uses of the Burgh Hall should be mindful of the need to avoid duplication and hence competing with other venues in the town. Respondents recognised the potential scope for synergy with other venues, and that this should be explored. These findings were supported by evidence gathered from interviews with key contacts, including research into other community venues in Peebles.

3.3 Una Richards went on to advise that the Community consultation results had fed into a proposed updated Vision for the building in the following terms: “local people wanted the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the Community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable. The key uses of the building were identified as: library,

museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.” She recommended that the updated Vision for the building be adopted as it summarised the Community’s aspirations for the building and identified the uses that the community had highlighted as critical to be housed in the building. It was further recommended that a re-ordering exercise was undertaken for the Chambers Institution. This should include the appointment of a design team to prepare a number of sketch schemes to explore the architectural feasibility of delivering the ideas for the building put forward by the Community. The sketch schemes should be the subject of a further Community consultation to determine a final scheme. The final scheme should be costed and a viability appraisal prepared for it. This would provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a 21st century vision for the building.

- 3.4 In response to a question raised Una Richards advised that the Design Team costs were incorporated within the £30,000 approved at the meeting held on 31 August 2015. As part of the re-ordering exercise an outline of the costs of the capital works would be provided. She explained the options available for sourcing capital funding and it was noted that SHBT would liaise with the Council’s Chief Financial Officer to confirm whether the Design Team would be appointed by Scottish Borders Council or SHBT. Interviews would be held in regard to the appointment of the Design Team. In answering a question relating to time-lines, Una Richards advised that SHBT would report back in approximately 6 months to help the Trust agree the way forward and give a steer financially on the best funding route. It was noted that the Council’s capital programme was oversubscribed over the next few years. Una Richards advised there was money available out there for the right building/scheme depending on the delivery route.

DECISION AGREED

- (a) **to adopt the recommended updated Vision for the building because it summarised the Community’s aspirations for the building and identified the uses that the Community had highlighted as critical to be housed in the building, namely:- “local people wanted the Chambers Institution to maintain and enhance its role as the cultural heart of the Community and for it to be attractive, welcoming, well-cared for, accessible and affordable. The key uses of the building were identified as: library, museum, art gallery and meeting spaces, and the quiet contemplative courtyard setting for the War Memorial.”**
- (b) **to undertake a re-ordering exercise for the Chambers Institution including the appointment of a Design Team to prepare a number of sketch schemes to explore the architectural feasibility of delivery the ideas for the building put forward by the Community and that the sketch schemes should be the subject of a further Community consultation to determine a final scheme. The final scheme should be costed and a viability appraisal prepared for it, this would provide a realistic roadmap to deliver a 21st century vision for the building.**
- (c) **SBHT would liaise with the Council’s Chief Financial Officer regarding whether the Design Team would be appointed by Scottish Borders Council or SHBT..**

4. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

5. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 May 2016 at 4.15 p.m.

DECISION

AGREED that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 May 2016 at 4.15 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm