

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST

MINUTE of MEETING of the
CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST held
via Microsoft Teams on 23 November
2022 at 3:30 p.m.

Present:- Councillors R. Tatler (Chair), D. Begg, M. Douglas, J. Pirone, E
Small, V. Thomson.
In Attendance:- Chief Legal Officer, Estates Strategy Manager, Estates Surveyor
(T. Hill), F. Colton (Live Borders), Democratic Services Team
Leader, Trainee Democratic Services Officer.

1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 19 October 2022.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chair.

2. **BENEFICIARIES GROUP FEEDBACK**

2.1 The Chair provided an update from the last Beneficiaries Group meeting. It was reported that the geographical spread of the group needed widening as it was clear from the last meeting and the tours of the Chambers Institution buildings that the existence and work of the Beneficiaries Groups was generally unknown, despite being advertised through social media, on the High Street and directly by library and museum staff. With the approval of the Committee, the Chair agreed to contact organisations directly with a view to encouraging greater participation. It was suggested by Fiona Colton (Live Borders) that the Beneficiaries Group contacted the Southern Upland Partnership as a possible source of paid administration support; the Chair agreed to follow this up.

2.2 Fiona Colton provided feedback from the Chambers Institution tours on the 15th and the meeting on the 16th November. The evaluation sheets completed by attendees pointed to issues with the acoustics in the Burgh Hall and the pros and cons of installing an audio loop or a PA system. It had been commented that the architect plans were too small to be seen on the projector screen; the plans on the display boards for the pending exhibition and consultation exercise were bigger and easier to read. The Chair had agreed to meet with both the Chair and the Manager of the Citizens Advice Bureau to discuss concerns raised by this tenant and update the Committee at the next meeting.

2.3 There followed a discussion on the need for a survey of all of the Chambers Institution buildings to ascertain their condition. The current difficulty in recruiting a new Scottish Borders Council surveyor who would carry out the work would delay progress. It was agreed that the Estates Manager would bring external surveyor quotes and an options appraisal to the next meeting and action a basic Energy Performance Certificate for the site.

- 2.4 With a view to further publicising the 27th November public consultation exercise and exhibition of the architect proposals, it was noted that locally printed banners were to be in situ as well as an actor as William Chambers to both encourage passers-by into the site and provide some background history to the Chambers Institution. A press release had been issued by both Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders along with social media posts. It had been suggested that a local journalist was approached to provide media coverage and the Chair agreed to contact Radio Borders. The Chair confirmed that a facilitator brief had been drawn up and was to be presented to the Beneficiaries Group for approval.

DECISION

(a) NOTED the update.

(b) AGREED that the Estates Strategy Manager obtain quotations and options appraisals from private surveyors.

3. PROPERTY UPDATE

- 3.1 The Estates Strategy Manager provided an update on Burgh Hall renovations. An initial program of works had been drawn up. The 16 week project had a start date of 9 January 2023 and a completion date of 24 April 2023. The original quote for the plasterwork of £122,000 had increased by £3,500. A request for this funding shortfall was agreed by the Committee. A request for a further 10-12% contingency budget was agreed in principle with the proviso that further detail was to be provided at the next meeting. Fiona Colton confirmed that Live Borders staff were responsible for sourcing of alternative accommodation for service users impacted by the 16 week closure.
- 3.2 An update on the procurement of wi-fi for the Burgh Hall was provided by Fiona Colton. There had been circulated a detailed quotation from GB Telecom of both one-off and monthly charges. Concern had been expressed at there being only two wi-fi access points to service the Burgh Hall interior and the potential lack of connectivity in the exterior quadrangle and Registrar's Office. The Chair requested that this matter be included in the next meeting's agenda for further discussion, with input from Sheena Milne (Live Borders) and GB Telecom.
- 3.3 The Chair reported a basic updated financial statement as follows:
- cash reserves of approximately £56,000 to the end of March 2023
 - investments with a book value of £399,000 to the end of March 2023
 - anticipated rental income of £17,500 per year

DECISION

AGREED to:-

(a) note the update;

(b) approve an additional £3,500 towards the budget shortfall and an in principle agreement for the contingency subject to further details being provided; and

(c) the inclusion of an agenda item regarding wi-fi access points in the Burgh Hall and its environs

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 14 December at 3:00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 16:15 p.m.