

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 10:00**

**A meeting to discuss a partnership request from Ventura Cottage relating to a bid to the National Archives**

**In Attendance:**

Lowestoft Town Council: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Andy Pearce, Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Bernie Rappensberger. Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Town Hall Project (via zoom): Sheila MossKing (Project Manager), Jess Johnston (Heritage Manager)  
Three representatives of Ventura Cottage

Joe Thompson informed the attendees that as the Finance and Governance (F&G) Committee had tasked them to consider how their project could be made available to future generations, they had explored how to deliver quality local history and one possible avenue was to bid for funding from the National Archives. The National Archives had been receptive to their project and suggested Ventura Cottage approach them for a grant of up to £20,000. Ventura Cottage envisaged the project being something physical within the Town Hall for public access, which would need to be complementary to the hall, though it would require sufficient space.

The Project Manager confirmed this proposal could be explored within the Town Hall project as another link to a heritage organisation, but requested clarification on whether this was an endorsement or a partnership and what Ventura Cottage's requirements would be in terms of physical space (i.e. would the project require a wall or an entire room). The two projects must not be in direct conflict and the Project Manager reminded attendees that the National Lottery Heritage Fund funding for the Town Hall must translate into lasting heritage.

Joe Thompson confirmed this would be a partnership and suggested the Town Hall have an area with an offline computer for this project and to access ancestry searches.

Ventura Cottage explained that as their partners, Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) would not be expected to make up any shortfall in the finances. If LTC were receptive to the partnership then Ventura Cottage would provide an explanation of what they intended to deliver through the bid and LTC could provide feedback such as how the project could be promoted through the wards and incorporated into the Town Hall.

If the bid was successful then the funds would be kept with LTC and the National Archives would supply and monitor project milestones which would demonstrate that the project aims had been fulfilled. It was not yet certain, if the bid was successful, whether the funding would be received up-front or in portions.

The Councillors noted that if LTC were to receive the funds then they would be the accountable body and needed to understand the implications of this.

Cllr Pearce suggested F&G provide an in-principle decision and once the draft bid is received from Ventura Cottage then F&G and Full Council would decide if LTC should enter the partnership and be accountable to the risks.

Cllr Begum suggested a working group be formed with Ventura Cottage and LTC representatives.

There would need to be a guarantee for LTC on the longevity of the project and how the project could continue without the individuals who started it. Joe Thompson confirmed that has been resolved and he would inform the Committee further on this.

The Project Manager requested a link to the grant programme be sent to check the terms and conditions. Regarding siting the project in the Town Hall, the Project Manager confirmed there were currently no plans for an independent study area and noted that the Town Hall project had originally intended to be a link rather than a competitor to the local library. A suggestion was made to have a computer terminal with a library subscription sited in one of the community rooms.

Ventura Cottage would discuss this proposal further with the Town Hall Project Manager and Heritage Manager. As this was not a LTC project neither would be paid professional fees for the meeting, it would instead be an informal discussion at their discretion.

Ventura Cottage intended to spread the project beyond Lowestoft to a county or country-wide scale and were already in talks with the Woodbridge Historic Society and Bury St Edmunds. Cllr Pearce noted that whilst for the partnership it could be an incidental benefit to grow the project beyond Lowestoft, if LTC were responsible for the funds then as the accountable body and a Town Council they would not be able to provide a grant for other parishes in the county.

Cllr Pearce proposed LTC confirm their in-principle interest in the project and intention to explore the possibility of the partnership as outlined in this meeting with LTC as the accountable body. Ventura Cottage were invited to put together a bid for presentation to April Full Council, or the next available meeting. Cllr Begum seconded the proposal and all Councillors in attendance voted in favour. This proposal would need to be ratified by F&G as this was a standalone meeting with no delegation to make decisions.

*The meeting ended at 11:17*