

4th June 2024 – Meeting with F&G and Ventura Cottage to discuss the National Archives bid as resolved at the 14th May F&G Committee meeting

In Attendance:

Ventura Cottage: Joe Thompson, John Ellerby and Damon Rogers

LTC: Cllrs Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Andy Pearce and Bernie Rappensberger. Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

187.5 To receive the notes and ratify the suggestions of the meeting with Ventura Cottage regarding a bid to the National Archives with Lowestoft Town Council as their partner -Cllr Pearce proposed to maintain the Committee's in-principle support with an item on the next agenda to review this. In the meantime, a meeting would be held with Ventura Cottage to finalise specific details such as the timeframe, finance details and risk management, which an officer should be in attendance for. A meeting would also be held, with an officer in attendance, with Ventura Cottage and the National Archives for further information on grant eligibility. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

The Nation Archives bid opens on 25th June for four weeks, therefore the deliberations needed to be completed within that timeframe.

The representatives from Ventura Cottage felt there would be minimal to no risk to Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) through this project as all milestones would be met and approved by LTC and The National Archives (TNA).

There were two main risks identified that the Finance and Governance Committee (F&G) would need to demonstrate mitigation of: if the members of Ventura Cottage were unable to continue and the project could not continue, or if the project was not delivered in time and LTC had to ensure the funds were returned to TNA. LTC would need to ensure they were not liable for repaying the money through public funds.

To mitigate the first risk a third party needed to have access to their main database, which Joe Thompson confirmed they had arranged for a third-party IT company to take on and complete delivery of the project if any of the main team were unable to continue. A digital executor letter had been arranged that contained all the passwords for databases and websites connected to the project.

There was an element of the project that would be delivered beyond the Lowestoft parish to Bury St Edmunds and Woodbridge. This would provide a wider profile for heritage to Lowestoft and the F&G members agreed that the projects delivered to other towns, without using LTC public funds, then this would be an incidental benefit. This would also require reassurance with risk mitigation as LTC would need to be reassured that should the project not be delivered they would not be expected to repay the funds for delivering projects outside the Lowestoft parish.

Advice was required from TNA as to whether this would be treated as an LTC project with delivery of the project appointed to Ventura Cottage, or if this would be viewed as a Ventura Cottage project that LTC are acting as guarantors for the funding. If it is to be treated as an LTC project then there would be an issue with delivering projects outside of the parish.

Joe Thomspon advised members that TNA approved of the project being a team effort and they would be happy to hear about the project having pride of place in the town hall.

If the project is recommended by F&G to Full Council, then LTC and Ventura would need to discuss how the project could complement with the Town Hall Project and ensure there would be no duplication or competition.

A working group was suggested with a minimum of three LTC Councillors and the representatives from Ventura Cottage to meet and receive monthly updates on the project and the milestones. A representative from the group could also be selected to have access to the database as a reserve should anything happen to the Ventura Cottage team.