

12th June 2024 – Meeting with the Finance & Governance Committee, Ventura Cottage and the National Archives to discuss the bid as resolved at the 14th May F&G Committee meeting

In Attendance: The National Archives (TNA): James Hodgson – Head of Archive Sector Funding
Ventura Cottage: Joe Thompson and Damon Rogers. Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) Finance & Governance Committee: Cllrs Nasima Begum and Wendy Brooks. LTC Officers James Cox (Finance and Information Officer), Kate Reeder (Heritage Manager) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Resolution by Finance & Governance on 14th May:

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.

James Hodgson confirmed the TNA's interest in the project and noted its potential for Lowestoft with the novel method of experiencing and engaging on heritage with local audiences.

It was explained that as a government funder, The National Archives (TNA) needed to ensure their funding was given to a recognised organisation that has rights or ownership of the heritage involved in the project.

Should this partnership commence, then LTC's responsibilities would be akin to a contractual relationship and act as the mediator between the TNA and Ventura Cottage, and LTC's name would be on the contract.

Risks for LTC related to the amount of money applied for as all funding would be passed to LTC in one payment before the project starts, therefore if project is not delivered then the funding would need to be returned to TNA. Their Code of Conduct would also need to be followed as an organisation in receipt of government funding, for example the funds could not be used for political purposes.

The Heritage Manager queried the reporting structure through the lifetime of the project. The TNA would set milestones that needed to be met and Ventura Cottage noted that there would be a monthly working group with LTC where progress reports would be provided.

The TNA would have its criteria set out in the application form and for monitoring purposes they would need to know if there have been opportunities to support the project, if there have been any issue. The TNA were understanding of possible changes in a project that occur between the bid and the final delivery of the project.

Cllr Pearce emailed the follow queries to the TNA:

1. This project has been brought to us by a community group, but the Town Council is being asked to be the project partner and accountable body for the funding. Would the grant application need to be framed as the Town Council's project, can it be framed as the applicant's project but with the Town Council as project partner and accountable body who will take responsibility for ensuring

that the grant is used for the purposes set out in the application, or does TNA have no strong opinion either way and either would be acceptable?

The TNA confirmed LTC would be the lead organisation with Ventura Cottage being their partner in the project delivery. Though it was explained this would be a formality due to LTC being the contracted organisation and the delivery of the project and how it is framed in the application would be decided between LTC and Ventura Cottage with specific delegations made to Ventura Cottage to deliver the project.

2. Should the application be successful, would the whole grant be drawn down at the outset or in incremental instalments?

The payments would be received in one instalment.

3. Should the application be successful, there would presumably need to be a funding agreement drawn up between TNA and the Town Council, with an attaching payment schedule particularly if the grant is to be drawn down in instalments? Is that correct?

This would be a standard government contract for grant funding and would be covered in the application.

4. Should the application be successful, what specific reporting/monitoring/delivery responsibilities would accrue to the Town Council, and over what time period e.g. one delivery report upon completion and delivery of the project, or periodic review meetings/reports at set intervals or completion of key milestones?

An excel spreadsheet with tabs would be ideal. To begin there would be questions on the current audience engagement, after which there would be six month intervals of checking in on the milestones, if there have been any changes in the milestones, if the budget requires adjustment and what challenges have been encountered. The TNA would be available for any discussions LTC require.

5. Would there be any other conditions or obligations that TNA would have of the Town Council if we were to agree to be the accountable body for this application and if that application were to be successful?

There would be no further conditions or responsibilities other than those specified in the contract.

Ventura Cottage queried if there were final reports required once the project was delivered that summarised the successes and difficulties. James Hodgson noted there was no obligation to do so, instead this would be operated under trust and understanding. LTC and Ventura Cottage would need to keep their own records, but the TNA would not require an in-depth expenditure report, nor would it require any receipts for the funding.

Ventura Cottage queried if there would be any restriction on advertising in press. James Hodgson confirmed any press release would need to state that the project was being delivered as part of a grant fund from TNA and parties would need to ensure they followed the Code of Conduct on how speak to the media.

James Hodgson notified the meeting that the opening of the grants bid had been delayed due to the pre-election period and the new dates would be announced soon.