

Swillington Educational Charity
Draft Minutes of the Open Meeting of Trustees, Thursday 24th October 2013

Present: Trustees Reverend Canon Rosemarie Hayes, (Chair), Councillor Judith Woodhead, Councillor Ian Wallace.

Minute taker Margaret Forth and 24 members of the public.

Apologies: Trustee Councillor Mark Dobson.

Reverend Canon Rosemarie Hayes welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. History:

- 1.1 Councillor Ian Wallace gave a brief outline of how the present Trustees came to be in post following the resignation of all previous Trustees in 2011.
- 1.2 There was no Insurance cover for the buildings and they had to be closed.
- 1.3 The Trustees were finally nominated by Leeds City Council, Great and Little Preston Parish Council and Swillington Parish Council and Reverend Canon Rosemarie Hayes agreed as Priest in Charge of St. Mary's Church to act as ex-officio Chair. These are requirements of the Charity Scheme. No other people would volunteer to become co-opted Trustees.
- 1.4 There was approximately £4,000 in funds but after paying for Utilities to be disconnected, making the roof as safe as possible, having an asbestos survey and paying for a report by a Chartered Surveyor the account now stands at £1.671.
- 1.5 Members of the public have attended most meetings and minutes circulated. Reports were given to both Parish Councils.
- 1.6 The Charity Commissioners have been fully informed of all actions and their advice sought before taking any decisions.

2. Details of Options: Councillor Ian Wallace gave details of all options discussed and these include retaining the buildings, demolishing the buildings and retaining the site, and selling the site.

- 2,1 The cost of restoring the buildings was far too expensive, £180,000 - £200,000 per building, given the Charity's financial position.
- 2.2 Demolition was a possibility but would have meant losing the historic buildings.
- 2.3 Selling the whole site. Four companies expressed an interest but only two put in firm bids. Beech Tree originally said it would build six properties, refurbish the School and lease it back for Community use. They then said they could only refurbish a very small portion of the Old School and the Trustees turned this down as of being no practical use. Beech tree then offered a figure for the whole site and would build more properties. Almax offered to buy site and retain and refurbish both buildings for private use.

3. Arrival at Decision:

- 3.1 After viewing all the options the Trustees unanimously agreed to sell the site to Almax, subject to contract, as the historic buildings would be retained largely unchanged on the outside.

4. Current Position:

- 4.1 The Solicitors for both parties are in contact and work is being done to register the land.
- 4.2 The Charity Commissioners are aware of what is being done.
- 4.3 The Trustees are aware that their main obligation is to act in the best interests of the Charity.
- 4.4 It is not yet known how much money will be available after the sale and fees will have to be paid to Solicitor.
- 4.5 Still two Trustee positions unfilled. Volunteers would be welcome.

5. Questions:

This is a summary of main points raised by questions.

Query	Response
Ownership of land. deeds and registration	Deeds from 1905 were used in 1982 when land sold for Community Centre. Copy obtained. Land needs to be registered and this is being done. This along with lack of records and documents has considerably delayed progress. Trustees can act even though the land is vested in the Official Custodian
Why no advertising of sale or position	Action had to be quick as buildings deemed in dangerous state and not insured. Trustees personally liable. Article in Rothwell Advertiser brought response from 4 interested parties. Trustees, at their own personal risk, agreed to postpone demolition if there was a chance to save all or part of the historical buildings. The last remaining legacy of the Lowther family in the village. No funds for or time for any other advertising. If the sale was put on the open market the Trustees would have no control on proposed use.
People were not aware of meetings.	Reports given at Parish Council meetings, some members of public did come to meetings.
Why could buildings not be retained by fund raising.	Lack of time and personnel. At least £200,000 would have been needed and it would have taken too long while buildings remained in a dangerous state and Trustees remained liable. No certainty it would have happened. This should have been happening years ago.
Could other people make a bid for the building	Unsure of legal position but as sale still subject to contract this may be possible.
Concern over lack of places to meet for some groups, especially young people	The Aims of the Charity are to provide resources for people to obtain further education, training and help to find employment. (Scheme available for full details)
What will happen to any monies raised	The Trustees will have to meet the aims of the Charity or approach the Charity Commissioners to be able to change any details of the Scheme.

This is not a verbatim report of the meeting but all the main points have been covered.

The points raised will be discussed at the next Trustees meeting.

A few people thanked the Trustees for their hard work but many people were very unhappy with the progress.

6. The Chair thanked everyone for attending and said the next meeting will be on Friday 15th November at 3.30 pm in St. Mary's Church.