

Asset Transfer Officer Panel: Monday 10 April 2017: Carnegie Library Association

Attendees from Carnegie Library Association: Jeff Doorn, Danny Friedman and Frances Alderson

Panel Members:

- Helen Charlesworth-May
- Andrew Ramsden
- Bruce McRobie
- Eddie Bridgeman: Meanwhile Space

Donna Wiggins: notes

Presentation

- Key functions of the organisation have been grouped together and will be led by 2 trustees
- Trustees have a wide range of skills and experience including: legal, finance and commercial.
- Key areas for the business plan: Financial sustainability & the building
- The additional £10K income in lieu of rent from the basement will be put into a sinking fund for the building to help fund repairs.
- Income: Projections are based on previous workspace use. Will pick up where this left off when the building was closed.
- Have assumed that not all the 28 desks will be occupied.
- Retail sales: history of successful winter fairs delivered by the Friends group - want to build in this.
- Looking to use the building for weddings and concerts.
- Have assumed that the community groups that have previously paid to use space in the building will continue to pay.
- Disability access – unhappy with the proposals for disability access included in the planning application.

Question	Response
The organisation will be trustees led and the proposals include elections after 12 months. What does this mean for continuity of leadership for the organisation?	<p>First AGM was held in March 2017</p> <p>It was agreed that the acting trustees' would remain in post.</p> <p>Looking to recruit an additional 3 trustees</p> <p>After year 1 the earliest trustees appointed will step down. This will ensure that a core group of people will remain.</p>
Comment from panel: May need to reflect on whether 12 month is long enough	
Disability access was mentioned in relation to physical access to the building. What are your thoughts on disability access not just for people with a physical disability?	<p>A number of the community groups that use the building work with people with disabilities.</p> <p>The building is seen as a haven for people with disabilities and for older people</p> <p>It's a safe place where everyone feels welcome</p> <p>Ruskin Readers provide one to one support for adults who are unable to read.</p> <p>Book at Breakfast – some of their members have issues with social exclusion or mental health</p> <p>The Chess Club includes a number of autistic children who can communicate through chess</p>
You are asking for a lease of 40 years or more? Would a lease of 25 years be a problem for the organisation	Grant funding bodies first question is how long is the lease
Comment: Both parties would probably want break clauses	
Are you content with the letter sent to you about the lease and the income?	<p>The change in income is not reflected with the business plan</p> <p>Will need to finalise practical issues – access to toilets/disability access</p>
What are the assumptions underpinning income expectations?	<p>28 workspaces available</p> <p>20 organisations/individuals have already indicated that they would like to return</p> <p>Have checked prices for similar facilities in the local area.</p> <p>Prices based on less than market rent</p> <p>Have assumed that 20 of the 28 spaces available will be taken up in Year 1</p> <p>Market testing has indicated that organisation could charge £350+ for use of the space. Looking to charge £175.</p> <p>Space had previously been let to London Arts Base. Looking to rent to the groups directly without the middleman.</p>

Question	Response
Does the £175 include VAT?	All figures exclude VAT
What re the plans to grow income from the workspace?	<p>There is a need for this type of space</p> <p>Rent is low - Confident that they can grow income gradually</p> <p>Feel that they are being cautious in their expectations</p>
How have you tested your cost assumptions? Is there a sense for what the group would do differently?	<p>Cleaning – number of local cleaners on low income. Group could support the development of a social enterprise to do the cleaning/catering.</p> <p>Looking at providing more employment opportunities for local people</p> <p>Have not yet looked at detail</p> <p>Potential to use volunteers for minor repairs</p> <p>Legal/professional costs nothing to base this on. Have included a figure that they think is reasonable.</p> <p>Looking to monitor income/expenditure on a monthly basis</p> <p>Business rates: looking to secure 80% rebate</p>
Will there be 24 hour access to the workspace and how would this affect security?	<p>Access was previously through the entrance on Ferndene Road.</p> <p>Will need to discuss security/access with the gym operator. Areas where they need to work together – security, waste etc.</p> <p>Need to ensure that access arrangements do not interfere with the gym access</p> <p>Have assumed that the Workspace would have access to Lambeth Wi-Fi</p>
Business Rates – does the proposal for 80% rebate include the workspace?	Will need to adjust if required
Your proposal includes making a contribution to the cost of Lambeth Library staff. Have there been any discussion about this?	<p>The Library was previously open for 36 hours per week.</p> <p>LBL looking to provide 12 hours of staffing per week.</p> <p>Need to agree core hours with the Library service and will then need to look at how the additional 24 hours are covered – i.e. buying in additional hours.</p>
What market testing has been done in relation to the retail sales	<p>Do not envisage a shop</p> <p>Flexibility is key for example pop up wheel in café bar</p>

Question	Response
	<p>Want to build on success of tea stall and previous events There is a backlog of goodwill in the local area. Steady increase in flow of income Restored focus in the community Activities complimentary to the library service Art Gallery – local artists have not in the past paid to display their work. A percentage of sales has gone to library service. Going forward - looking to take a commission from the sale of art work.</p>
<p>Financial contingency planning – what action would you take in the event of a shortfall?</p>	<p>Built in contingency – paid staff on year 2, buying in additional library service and £20K income from gym. Looking to build up 6 months running costs in the bank Confident that they will be able to rely on volunteer support Diverse community – local people are prepared to contribute It may take a while to build up 6 months Have assumed that existing groups will move straight back in and pay Once agreement is reached – could secure workspace tenants and ask them to pay in advance</p>
<p>The proposals include a plan to re-instate the work space and grow the income significantly. The income projections appear generous. How will the organisation prepare for the level of growth on what was previously a temporary arrangement, with low expectations of the facilities available i.e. reliable broadband, printing facilities, showers/toilets, security etc.</p>	<p>There are no issues with the level of expectation from workspace users Users to be involved in any consultation framework for the building Will work directly with workspace users Want to have flexible spaces for leaning activities April 2015 – formed Carnegie Library Consultative Group – number of workspace users have joined group – which continues to meet.</p>
<p>Trustees will lead on key groups for year 1. Will they be on site daily?</p>	<p>Will arrange for some trustees to be on site on a daily basis.</p>

Question	Response
The organisation has 300 members. On what terms are they members?	Anyone can apply to join – need to support the aims and objectives Membership is free and will continue to be free for the time being
What are the plans if you are unable to recruit sufficient volunteers to run the building? Is there a Plan B and what happens if Plan A and B don't work?	Have done a number of surveys: Last survey captured skills of prospective volunteers and how much time they could contribute. There is a 50% contingency. Have looked at how many volunteers would be needed on a daily basis and the skills required There is financial and goodwill contingency Nicholas Edwards – volunteer specialist: Will look to have volunteer recruitment programme – meeters and greeters and specialist volunteers Programme for developing volunteers
Do the volunteers get anything?	No financial contribution Can include on CV's School/work experience Helps to develop confidence Social/make friends Friends group have a good track record of recruiting volunteers to help with garden and cake stalls etc.
How will you ensure that you reach all corners of the community?	Have spoken to local Oxfam shop that is run by volunteers – they bring in people who are not the natural volunteer type. Have undertaken mapping of the catchment area What happens if Plan A and B don't work - Hope that there will be funds available for paid staff from year 2 Will need to ask why volunteers are not stepping forward
Is the group part of any support network e.g. Locality	No
How will you move from a trustee to a management role?	Will bring personal experience to bear Have limited the number of trustees initially. Have people on the waiting list Keen to nurture

Question	Response
	<p>In interim phase – difficult to commit to a particular route until a decision is made. Trustees have a wide range of experience</p>
<p>We know that volunteers tend to fall into particular demographic groups. You touched on the fact that young people are prepared to be more active. What are your expectations for expanding the volunteering opportunities for young people</p>	<p>Good sprinkling of young people attending meetings Local demonstrations have helped galvanise support – young people have realised that they need to be more involved. Core of young people ready to engage Issues to resolve around safeguarding and that they need to attend school Know that they need to do specific work around young people</p>
<p>How will you ensure that day to day repairs are managed?</p>	<p>Built in £10K per year for repairs Building sinking funds Surveys completed on building. Will need to speak to GLL about items such as lift maintenance, insurance etc. Number of issues need to be discussed with LBL/GLL. Looking to set up planned maintenance schedule - do regular reviews of building Review what major repairs may be needed Would want the building handed over in a good state of repair.</p>
<p>How will you ensure that your responsibilities around health and safety and safeguarding are fulfilled with a volunteer managed facility?</p>	<p>Will have fully worked up health and safety and safeguarding policy Training programme Regular feedback from volunteers At least 1 volunteer in each shift DBS checked</p>
<p>How will you ensure that the sinking fund doesn't disappear for use on other things</p>	<p>Will have two separate bank accounts</p>
<p>Safeguarding - experience in operational services - safeguarding processes is not the same is practical</p>	<p>Number of volunteers are ex teachers – can draw on safeguarding experience Danny – over 30 years experience working with social care policy Frances – ex Governor of Herne Hill School involved on writing H&S policy.</p>

Question	Response
experience. Who in the organisation knows and has lived experience	
How will you know if you're successful	Will ask people – surveys/feedback Physical numbers Talk to people who have not used the building Surveys – postal/face to face Review what can be done to improve user experience Already know quite a lot about the demographics of the local area Will review and take action
How will you know if you're not succeeding	Have a range of past surveys – can review satisfaction levels (not all the information is consistent) Review numbers Ask people
The first 6 months are going to be vital – what has been mapped in terms of expectations	At end of first 12 months will review against budgets and look at why income targets have not been met. I.e. is there some fundamental error or are minor tweaks required. Will monitor finances monthly. Have been cautious with numbers – pessimistic but realistic
How will you know in the moment if successful or not?	Have plan/projections for each month. Looking at organising big event in first 6 months Monthly cash flow projections included in business plan

Questions/comments from Group

- Would like to know what the plans are for the building
- Can the library be e-opened prior to the completion of the basement works?
- Would like to talk to GLL about how they can work together to run the building in the most effective way
- Review DDA access which will not require access via the gym

- GLL work – what was approved as part of planning process

What happens next?

- Panel scheduled to meet with the other group at the end of the month
- Review meeting to be held after this session to review information from both groups and make recommendation
- Decision likely to be first week of May

General comments from panel after group had left:

- Organisation appear to be comfortable about their levels of support and volunteers
- Need to decide if this stacks up in reality; do numbers convert to activity
- Does the group have the ability to run the building – probably.
- How real are the financial projections – converting talk and aspirations
- Organisation underplaying costs of running the building.
- Organisation came across very well
- Optimistic
- Key – planning for first 12 months – developing transitional plan
- Post year 1 may be more difficult – incurring debt/paid staff
- Hard to say if the offer maximises the benefit of the building