



MERTON PRIORY TRUST

Minutes of meeting held in the Chapter House Thursday 14th May 2009

Present:

Marcus Beale (Chair), Cyril Maidment, Nicholas Hart, Mary Hart, John Hawks, Cllr Nick Draper, Cllr Geraldine Stanford, Vicki Carroll, Stephen Llewellyn, Claire Bradfield, Dave Saxby

1. Apologies: Dave Roberts, Cllr Maurice Groves, Caroline Kearey
2. Minutes of last meeting: Agreed as a correct record.
3. Matters arising: are dealt with under main agenda.
4. Current status: The land transfer, and consequently the Section 106 funds, are still stalled - LBM Legal are still negotiating with the present owners Axa. Marcus and John H had asked Nicholas to act in a watching capacity for the Trust, and he presented a "Programme for Moving Forward" which the Meeting accepted with gratitude. [Post meeting note: considerable interest has been shown by Cllrs Chellew and Dean, who had met Dave and Cyril, and will try to move the situation forward, in the context of the Borough's new strategic plan. Marcus Beale has also contacted Councillor Marc Hanson who had offered some time ago to assist with the legals at the appropriate time.]
5. Pylon area. Axa have locked off the pylon area so that it could no longer be used for parking, thus removing a potential source of funding for MPT. It was speculated whether this might be a delaying tactic or else an attempt to force the pace! (In theory Axa could also lock off the Chapter House itself, though the circumstances that might prompt that were hard to imagine.) Meeting felt, as ever, that the continued deadlock and uncertainty were unsettling, but accepted that no progress could be made until the ownership issue were resolved, and MPT were issued by LBM with an appropriate licence which empowered them to progress the project as the community asset we all desire. In the meantime we would therefore continue with the present level of activity without any change.
6. Condition of the Chapter House: Complaints had been received from "The Friends of Merton Priory" to English Heritage, the Leader of Merton Council, The London Mayor's Office, and others, possibly including Axa. Much e-mailing and discussion had taken place as a result, among others with the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Jane Sidell) and Merton Council (Caroline Kearey), both of whom were satisfied that their concerns are unjustified. Meeting agreed (a) that the condition of the Chapter House was no worse and no better than ever, and (b) that for the time being it should continue to be used (with appropriate respect) for present purposes, including some storage, provided this is kept clear of historic remains or artefacts, and causes no deterioration or damage.
7. Nones: The annual Nones service has taken place, held by "The Friends of Merton Priory". Meeting was pleased that this should continue and recognised the Friends of Merton Priory as an important part of the project, but that we should also pursue Rev Gilly Pawson about possible mainstream parish uses.

8. Wandle Valley Festival: The Chapter House will be open all weekend (6th/7th June 2009) and also for selected schools on Monday 8th, offering the usual activities - children's archaeology with Dave's team and Block printing with Mary.

9. London Open House: The Chapter House will be open as usual (September 19th/20th 2009)

10. Drama: Meeting was happy that the Chapter House should continue to be used as in previous years for drama during Abbeyfest, provided due care was taken with the remains and security of the premises.

[Subsequently it was agreed this year's production of Romeo and Juliet (July 6th-19th) would feature the Tomb Scene - an ideal setting! - in the Chapter House. No seating or lighting would be involved, as this was to be a short "promenade" scene only, the main production taking place at MAM.] Agreed no payment would be asked, but that the Colour House Theatre company would pay for any electrical upgrade that might be necessary (e.g. emergency lighting), and be responsible for any additional cost involved in public liability insurance. [For this limited use the Council's Entertainments Licencing Officer has agreed a temporary licence]

11. Any Other Business: Cllr Nick Draper . Meeting was delighted to welcome Nick as the new Mayor of Merton, whose enthusiasm, energy and friendship has been one of our great assets. Warmest congratulations Nick!

12. Meeting expressed gratitude for the support of Cllr Maurice Groves and enthusiastically agreed Marcus's proposal that he be invited to join as a Trustee.

Next meetings:

5pm Monday 27 July 2009, at 1 Compton Road SW19 7QA to approve the accounts

5pm Thursday 17th September 2009, which will also be the AGM.

Notes by John Hawkes and Marcus Beale 8 July 2009

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