

# MERTON PRIORY TRUST

## MINUTES OF MEETING WEDNESDAY 21st MARCH 2012

### 1. PRESENT

### ACTION

Chair: Marcus Beale (MB), Cllr Nick Draper (ND), Cllr Richard Chellew, Cllr Maurice Groves (MG), Cllr Geraldine Stanford (GS), David Saxby (DS), Nicholas Hart (NH), Cyril Maidment (CM), John Hawks (JH), Vicki Carroll (VC), Dave Roberts (DR).

### 2. APOLOGIES

Richard Lancaster, Jane Sidell, Angela Gorman (AG)

### 3. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Meeting approved JH's summary of recent meetings and events.

### 4. STRATEGY

MB outlined the strategic and funding options which had emerged from the recent "brainstorm" session and would circulate AG's draft report by email.

**MB**

**Option A** was for the Trust to bid for part of the recent successful HLF bid by Living Wandle, which might be in the region of £200,000.

**Option B** was to go for a fast turn-round HLF bid, maximum £100,000 - this the meeting rejected.

**Option C** was the 2-stage HLF bid which could achieve £500,000 or more but would certainly take all of two years including the preliminary stage - this too was felt to be longer than desirable, although it was noted (a) that it would be unlikely Stage I would be approved if Stage II had not a strong likelihood of success, and (b) that this type of bid might call for as little as 10% match funding.

If Option A were adopted the likely scheme should include (1) infrastructural improvements to the Chapter House itself (including underfloor heating which would make the space usable as a venue for at least half the year), (2) an additional foyer construction which contained services, toilets, precious exhibits and a "curatable" area, and (3) appropriate external treatment.

This, however, would consume all of the likely combined funds available, and RC recommended strongly that the Trust should not commit all the Section 106 money to this if it could be more advantageously used as seedcorn for another larger bid (e.g. 10% of a 1 million bid). ND agreed that best value had to be the criterion, but felt this should not persuade us to sit on the money in the hope of a future ideal when the need for the community was immediate.

MB stressed that the S.106 funds had the strict aim of preserving and displaying the remains, while JH added that in any plan (a) funds should be allowed for display equipment, interactive technology, signage etc. as well as building, and (b) income potential must be maximised and the potential of hiring out the Chapter House for a variety of functions was an essential part of this. Agreed that a business plan should take account of a database of Friends, Donations, ongoing fundraising activity, and promotional/ educational elements like travelling exhibitions, "virtual tours" etc. MG reminded the meeting that this was a project for which an entrance fee was not an option.

Meeting agreed that an open mind should be kept and no decision taken until there was a better idea of the costs involved in the Option A route. MB would prepare an outline drawing and consult a friendly QS. It was also agreed that MB/JH/DS and NH would meet Living Wandle asap.

**MB**

## **5. PROJECT MANAGER**

Meeting agreed that ideally the Trust required a manager whose “day-job” it was to progress the project. JH said he would be happy to be considered, a suggestion which the meeting unanimously endorsed. (JH was available, had been project manager of Merton Abbey Mills since its inception, had managed the Chapter House itself throughout this time, and had intimate knowledge of the project). Agreed JH will prepare a proposal

**JH**

JH raised the related question of whether MB was not the ideally qualified person to undertake the architectural input, with which the meeting again was in complete agreement. MB would consider the practicalities of this.

**MB**

## **6. IMMEDIATE ISSUES**

**MB/JH/NH**

### **Licence:**

This was a matter of urgency as no work or expenditure could be undertaken without authority and the project was now in limbo; LBM Legal Department’s response had been a full lease document which was inappropriate, especially since the details of the land transfer were unsatisfactory. MB had emailed the Trust’s concise response prepared by NH, and the next step would be a meeting with RL to determine a way forward.

### **Improvement Works:**

No progress could be made until the licence was agreed; to help things along JH had suggested getting some quotes from known tradesmen, but meeting felt that this would not be appropriate as LBM might require competitive quotes and approved suppliers. Matters were getting especially urgent in respect of the sand removal as there had been many complaints and rats were now creating a public health hazard.

### **Payment of AG’s fee:**

This was a priority to be discussed at the meeting with RL.

## **7. EVENTS**

The next scheduled public opening on Easter Sunday: meeting thanked DS for his devoted work in revamping the entire exhibition. Thereafter the planned dates so far were 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> June (Wandle Weekend), 28/29<sup>th</sup> July (Festival of British Archaeology), 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> September (London Open House) and 29/30<sup>th</sup> September (Merton Arts Trail). MB will add these to the website.

**MB**

The Mayor was still kindly considering a banquet in aid of the Chapter House which was understood to be scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> May.

The Olympic Torch would be passing by nearby on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, and thought would be given to opening on that day.

## **8. AOB**

### **Accountancy**

DR reported that Hartley Fowler had taken over Strover Leader’s work, and that he would continue as MPT Treasurer.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This was fixed for 5pm on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April chez MB, The Old Post Office, 1 Compton Road SW19.