



## MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE *Full Council/Assembly Hall Working Group*

*Monday 22 January 2024*

#### *Approaches to Architects for Assembly Hall/ Blue Pool Project.*

#### **Report of *The Committee Clerk***

##### **1 Purpose of the report**

To update councillors on the Assembly Hall/ Blue Pool project

##### **2 Background**

On 27 November 2023 full council made the following resolution – ‘that Councillor Aves and the Committee Clerk draft a brief for architects, to then be circulated to members for comment. Any suggestions for architects to be forwarded to the Committee Clerk who is delegated to circulate the brief to architects.

Wording was supplied by Councillor Aves and circulated to all councillors. The wording was slightly amended by the Committee Clerk to remove, at the suggestion of the Locum Clerk, the word ‘tender’ and to make the wording flow.

The final wording, agreed with Councillor Aves was – ‘Melksham Town Council is about to embark on an exciting new project – the development of a new community facility in the centre of the town.

We have at our disposal two separate community facilities, the Assembly Hall and the Blue Pool, which are set back-to-back on a large space behind the Town Hall. We would like to develop one vibrant, versatile space that will serve the needs of a growing community for the foreseeable future. The resulting project must also reflect a commitment to environmentally conscious building practices and low, sustainable running costs.

Whilst we have our own list of needs and end uses, we are open to other suggestions that you might think sit with our vision of a modern entertainment facility that will stand out as a model for other towns to admire, as a standard for the 21st century.

We therefore invite plans from interested parties.

Attached are scale maps of the site showing present buildings, which you are at liberty to utilise, demolish or adapt, together with meeting minutes which show our wish list of facilities. For viewings of the properties and site please phone or email for an appointment with the Town Clerk or Town Council representative.

We look forward to hearing from you and discussing how your ideas fit in with our vision.’

This wording and supporting documents was forwarded to the following firms, as supplied by councillors:-

- Roberts Slimbrick
- DB3 Group
- SR

- DKA
- SRA
- NVB

It was also forwarded as a courtesy to Mark Saint of MEA.

Details were also posted to Melksham Town Council website and social media.

### **3 Current Situation**

The following responses have been received.

#### **DB3 Group**

Thanks for your email introducing what sounds like an exciting opportunity for Melksham. We had some early involvement via Wiltshire Council with the Melksham Campus project and delivered the relocation of Melksham football and rugby clubs to their new sites, so would be interested in principle.

However I have a few queries at this stage –

- Are you seeking proposals from a limited number of architects at the moment, or has this email been circulated to a large number of parties?
- Your email mentions that you are seeking plans – do you mean just initial thoughts about uses or drawn design proposals?
- If the latter, is this a design competition? If so, I think we would need to see a more detailed brief, scoring criteria and the reward for the successful company.
- Is funding in place for the project?
- You don't mention a fee so should we assume work carried out at this stage would be speculative?

I would be happy to discuss further on the phone if this would be easier.

#### **DKA**

Thank you for thinking of DKA. Exciting news!

You may / may not be aware that DKA has an intimate knowledge of the Melksham House / Melksham Assembly Hall / Blue Pool sites. We have been involved with the Melksham House site since 2011 when Wiltshire Council decided to purchase the site from Cooper Tyres.

In addition to our work related to the design of the Melksham Campus (DKA did the concept design through to planning / tender), we have over the years also looked at various options for the possible use of the Blue Pool site with Wiltshire Council.

In 2017 we were approached by Melksham Town Council for undertaking a feasibility for the Assembly Hall and Blue pool, but this wasn't pursued.

You mention that you are inviting plans 'from interested parties'. Do you see this as a competition with some initial concept ideas, rather than a fee proposal for an initial feasibility study? If so, do you have a timeframe for responses?

If possible, we would like to arrange a site visit - can you let us know the best time that suits you?

## **NVB**

Many thanks for the message and taking my call earlier.

As I mentioned, we would be delighted to be involved in this exciting opportunity, but I am a little unclear on what the Council are expecting in response to the message? The implication appears to be that the Council are expecting work to be undertaken for no charge. I'm afraid this is not possible.

If the Council wish us to provide a fee proposal for a feasibility / option study, we would be delighted to provide this.

A little more information would be helpful ...

1. What is the Council's timescale to undertake such a study?
2. How much engagement would the Council wish to undertake with the wider community?
3. What is the approximate project budget that the Council has in mind?
4. Will the completion of the study lead to an appointment (Architectural) to deliver the project?
5. What is the Council's preferred procurement route?
6. Is a suitable cost consultant already appointed?

In the meantime I would be delighted to meet with the Council to explain how we could assist, if that would be of interest.

## **Mark Saint**

I understand where the members are coming from and the approach may achieve a similar output to the RIBA competition option I suggested a few months ago.

However, the briefing below needs, in my view, to also consider commercial and associated matters too. Without doing so, the Council may get into a bit of a pickle with next steps post submissions.

Just my thoughts and I wish you luck with the process.

No reply was received from SR or SRA. The named person at Roberts Slimbrick had retired and suggested an alternative contact. No reply was received from that alternative.

## **4 Recommendations**

It is clear that all three firms who replied are interested but seek clarification on fees/funding and what the council expects at this stage. These would seem to be the kinds of issues Mark Saint foresaw. Councillors need to decide on how they wish to take the matter forward.