

Higham Ferrers Town Council

Notes of Library Working Party – Tuesday 13th March 2018 – 1.30pm at the Town Hall

Present: Cllr B Prigmore (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A Gardner (Vice-Chairman), Cllr H L Jackson, Cllr R Gell, Cllr Mrs A Sauntson, Mrs S J Mitcham (Town Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

None

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

3. APPROVE NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting on 13th February 2018 were agreed.

4. FEEDBACK ON ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.

Jon Sidey had visited the Library and drawings were still outstanding.

The surveyor had revisited the building and viewed the roof spaces. Report below: -

In the ground floor ones I was only able to get my head and shoulders in because of the narrowness of the hatch but in each case, it was possible to ascertain that there was no evidence of water penetration in the accessible parts of the roof.

Unfortunately, because of the nature of the construction, the valleys are below the ceiling line and as it was not possible to get into the roof completely I could not inspect the valleys themselves as the ceilings are approximately 1/3rd up the length of the rafters.

I can say that there was nothing to indicate any smell of rot within the roof spaces. Minor damp staining was noted in one or two places but none of this was considered serious. The only way to be certain about the presence of rot in the timbers will be to physically open either from within or from without and check the timbers in that way.

I also was able to have a more detailed look within the main roof space. This area is quite substantially constructed with steel beams supporting the lower purlins on the left-hand side and substantial timbers on the right-hand side and in the centre. In each case the timbering is satisfactory and there is nothing to indicate any water penetration or rot in the visible areas. You will understand however that again the lower areas at the eaves were concealed.

Based on what I can see, my instinct is that there are probably no really serious problems here and that any such problems should be quite readily curable but until you start to remove tiles for external repair you will not be able to know the full extent of any damage.

The fact that there is only limited dampness within the building, except in the staff wc where there is a serious problem, probably means that for the most part there are no real issues, but clearly where there is serious dampness then further investigation and some expense has got to be anticipated.

5. UPDATE AND REVIEW OF LATEST SITUATION RE THE LIBRARY.

Earlier in the day the NCC Cabinet report on the next stages and timeframes for the Library had been published. Copy attached to the notes. It was noted that any decisions taken in Cabinet may change once the Inspector publishes his report.

More information was still needed before a decision could be taken by the Council whether they wanted it and it was feasible to buy/lease the building and run a library in it. At the moment the offer was for the books element only and none of the wellbeing activities that were valued by the community.

It was recommended that the following recommendation be put to Council.
That the Council submit an expression of interest to run an independently managed library.
Until such time as full information was available to make a final decision, it was unreasonable to not keep the dialogue open with NCC.

Clerk had already asked for a meeting with County Council officer as soon as possible.

6. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING ITEM

Cllr B Prigmore had drafted a report to be presented to the Annual Town Meeting. Subject to changes due to the report just published by Cabinet, and review by the Town Clerk members supported the report.

7. DISCUSSION AND AGREEMENT OF FUTURE ACTIONS

None

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

3rd April 2018 at 1.30pm.