



HELSTON TOWN COUNCIL

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Pamela Lavelle Town Clerk



4th June 2024

To: The Mayor and Members of the Town Council

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend a Special Meeting of Helston Town Council to be held at the Guildhall, Helston on **MONDAY 10TH JUNE 2024 at 6.30 p.m.** for the purpose of transacting the undermentioned business.

Yours sincerely,

Pamela Lavelle
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Members to declare interests (including the details thereof) in respect of any item on this Agenda.
3. At this juncture the Meeting will adjourn for a period of up to fifteen minutes to permit members of the public present to put questions to Members or to make observations.
4. To consider the future direction of the Coronation Gardens Community Café Project. (A report by the Projects Officer outlining the issues with the current proposal is attached at **Page 3.**)

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REPORT OF THE PROJECTS OFFICER Special Full Council 10th June 2024

Community café

The following issues have been identified with the current project:

Public access – Access would only be possible on foot. This is not uncommon for a cafe located in a park however where Coronation Gardens differs is the lack of available parking in the immediate vicinity. Encouraging customers to walk to the café should always be the ambition of the café and incentives can be put in place to promote that. However, statistically, the general public will choose to drive to a location if it requires them to walk for longer than 5 minutes or .25 of a mile. If customers are not able to park close by and live further than .25 miles away they are much less likely to visit the café, effectively limiting the cafe's catchment area and therefore potential sales. There is also the issue of accessibility for those with reduced mobility. The café will be designed and built to meet many access needs and make it as inviting and inclusive as possible but with a lack of disabled parking spaces close by these features will not be used to their full extent, again limiting opportunities for sales and use.

Commercial Access – commercial collection and delivery. Having consulted with a waste collection company they have reported that to collect any waste from the café the bins would need to be pulled to the other end of Oliver Terrace and left roadside to be emptied. Similarly, delivery would likely need to be collected from the roadside or at best the park end of Oliver's Terrace. While this is not impossible for staff and volunteers to do it the manual handling element of this does pose a greatly increased risk to the organisation that is operating the café, exposing them to legal action from injured staff and volunteers.

Potential to hire – When comparing the proposed café to other community café facilities I have seen that it is common for them to be part of a larger complex or building that includes a large space for community hire. These other organisations are supplementing their cafes with this additional hire income. While the intention for the Helston community café is that the café space can be hired its size and primary use as a seating area for the café limits its appeal as a space for hire and equally potential income. Access again will impact on appeal for hire as organisations that would like to hire the space may want to invite individuals from further afield but will not be able to direct them to any nearby parking.

Dictating to future operator – It has always been the intention that the café will be handed to a CIC for the long-term operation of the facility. As part of the recent funding application and with the work of the Exeter University Students there has been a focus on developing a business plan for the café. This plan would greatly affect the design choices and final fit out of the café and in my opinion, would leave the CIC, whether they agreed or not, tied to delivering the vision set out by this business plan. As an example, the business plan could elect that the café will only serve basic coffee, cake and sandwiches, and the CIC may decide to serve a more comprehensive menu increasing appeal and income from food sales. That would require the CIC to raise funds for the purchase and installation of a full commercial kitchen that would not be necessary for serving coffee and cake.

I believe the CIC should be formed as soon as possible and can then collaborate with Helston Town Council on a business plan and help guide the project until the building is handed over to them formally.

Cost analysis – the project is at a point where funding is needed to progress the technical aspects of the design. There will be a cost to have this additional work done, estimated at 5k. If there are any doubts about the project they should be settled before further funds are used to progress the design/project. Any proposed changes would build on the work already done on this project, such as the precedent set by the initial planning permission and the surveys of the local residents that were undertaken. I believe that continuing with a project with the above issues only risks greater losses.

Sustainability – as well as financial sustainability the café needs to champion environmental sustainability. While it has always been the Council's intention to include infrastructure that facilitates this there is no reference to or design for any of these elements. These elements have not been costed into the project so far and will need to be considered if the current design is progressed.

Quotes – for the recent funding application great efforts were made to obtain quotes from a number of different suppliers and contractors for the proposed construction. However, these quotes were compiled at the end of 2022 and the likelihood that these quotes are still accurate or valid is unlikely. Inflation has impacted projects across the country over the last 18 months and organisations are facing shortfalls on a daily basis when delivering funded projects. An informal conversation with an individual in the construction industry suggests that the existing construction quote of the café of £160k could exceed 200k with current material costs.

Funding opportunities – As a town council the funding opportunities available to us are limited by the type of organisation we are, this can be negated by forming the CIC which will also be able to apply to funders on behalf of the project. Further to this, the potentially limited catchment area of the café could deter funders as often a key measure of any funding impact is the size of the population that benefits.

In summary, I feel that continuing with the project in its current format would lead to any organisation running it failing in the long term, resulting in the building being handed back to Helston Town Council. Helston Town Council would not in good faith be able to operate the café itself and another organisation is not likely to take up the challenge given that a previous organisation had not been able to sustain it in the long run.

This is in no way a dismissal of the concept and idea of placing a café in Coronation Gardens, I believe that it is a wonderful project that could deliver a really special facility for the community. However, with the recent disappointing funding outcome, I feel it is a good time to take stock of what we want the project to deliver and how best to do that to ensure it can go from strength to strength over the coming years.