

# TENTERDEN TOWN COUNCIL – EXTERNAL COMMITTEE

## CINEMA FOCUS GROUP

### MINUTES OF A MEETING ON 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019

**Present:** Cllr. Mike Carter, Cllr. Sue Ferguson, Claire Gilbert (Deputy Town Clerk), Tom Evans (Chair), Alan Bates, Colin Campbell, Paul Hale, Chris Head, Barbara Lawrence, Carol Parkin, Nic Phillips, Fran Sharp, Bob Somerscales, Gill Topley and Wilfred Watters.

1. **Apologies for Absence.** Elaine Mahoney, Seren Welch and Lindsay Phillips.
2. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were agreed.
3. **Matters Arising.** None.
4. **Meeting with Councillors on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019.**
  - 4.1 Tom Evans reported that a meeting was held with the Town Councillors, at the Focus Group's request, to clear the air. There was a very good response and seven out of the 16 Councillors attended. Tom conducted a presentation and all of the Councillors seemed receptive. There were quite a few questions and interesting discussions took place after the meeting. Tom Evans, Paul Hale and Colin Campbell represented each working group.
  - 4.2 A few questions/suggestions were posed by the Councillors.
    - (i) In the next phase, have the group thought about including building reinstatement in the business plan? Tom commented that Ron Inglis would be well placed to include this.
    - (ii) It was suggested that the presentation to Councillors be put on the Town Council's website; Alan Bates agreed to post the link on the TDRA's website. Cllr. Sue Ferguson suggested putting the presentation on YouTube as an embedded video.
    - (iii) With regard to publicity, how are the group publicising the Cinema? Tom reported that all publicity remains under the Town Council for now. Cllr. Nelson suggested setting up the new Company now to get the ball rolling. Tom reported the new Company would need to be set up very quickly once the full building feasibility study was complete. Tom commented that to make this happen would need people assigned to help drive it forward.
  - 4.3 Nic Phillips asked whether, with only seven Councillors attending the meeting, had there been any discussion about the general feeling of Councillors? Tom commented that the meeting was purely to discuss the operation of the Focus Group.
5. **Pre-Planning Application Progress Report.** Claire Gilbert reported that a site meeting would be taking place week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> March with Stefanie Fischer and Historic England. Claire reported that site visits were

extremely sensitive with White Stuff employees. It was agreed that Claire would find out from Stefanie how long it would take to receive feedback from Historic England and then feedback from Ashford Borough Council.

Tom Evans and Colin Campbell commented that this all has an impact on the route map, legalities and the setting up of a new Company. Alan Bates commented that there may be no requirement to terminate the lease with White Stuff as the programme of works might not start until after the lease expired. It was agreed that Claire should ask Stefanie for a copy of her report for the Focus Group following the site meeting.

## **6. Working Groups' Progress/Updates.**

- 6.1 Operators Working Group. Paul Hale suggested that he phone the interested operators to keep them informed of where we are at. It was suggested that Stefanie Fischer's report, which it is hoped would be received after the site visit with Historic England, could be forwarded on to the interested operators. Further investigations regarding the Independent Cinema Office (ICO) needed to take place.
- 6.2 Finance & Structuring Working Group. Chris Head reported that they had not managed to get a legal person on board and those that had said they might be interested had conflicts of interest. Both Nic Phillips and Tom Evans had other people they could ask so would investigate further.
- 6.3 Route Map Working Group. Tom reported that the update of the route map would be delayed until the pre-application information is received. Colin asked whether we were going to the ICO for advice; Tom reported that the document that Seren Welch had circulated regarding starting a Cinema was interesting, but somewhat dated and was very much 'one size fits all'. It was agreed that we should not duplicate work due to be done by Ron Inglis' in the full building feasibility study stage.
  - 6.3.1 With regard to fundraising, two companies might need to be set up to protect investors/investments. Firm promises/commitments from investors would need to be obtained before any spending of funds. A separate Company could be set up for the development work and take up the running of the project; it is all about ringfencing the risk.
  - 6.3.2 Tom reported that the Town Council would prefer a lease agreement with the new Company, not a return on a possible investment. Sue Ferguson used the Kent & East Sussex Railway as an example and suggested that Shaun Dewey is approached re: companies with shareholders.
  - 6.3.3 Cllr. Mike Carter suggested that the Town Council be asked to consult their solicitors, Whitehead Monkton, to seek advice on how best to tackle the lease to the new Company and maybe also ask advice for the setting up of a cinema company. Possible questions are:
    - (i) how should it be structured to protect the Town Council? Once the new company was set up, they would need to seek independent advice;

- (ii) what protection does the Town Council need/what guarantees do there need to be for the lease to the new Company? The new Company would then lease the building to the cinema operator;
- (iii) what would happen if the cinema fails? Would there be issues if the operators go? What happens then?

Mike Carter suggested the request for legal advice be put into the Town Council as soon as possible.

6.3.4 Chris Head asked for clarification on what state the Pebbles would be handed over to the new Company. Tom suggested that the Town Council should spend their allocated funding (£500,000) to improve the building/renovate before handing it over.

6.3.5 Sue Ferguson & Mike Carter reported that there had been a brief discussion at the last Tourism & Business Sub-committee meeting on the idea of 'Tenterden Improved Phase 2'; they suggested that the Cinema proposal could be incorporated as part of that. Mike also reported that he would be speaking to Lindsay Hammond soon regarding the cultural hub.

## **7. Press and Community Relations.**

7.1 Sue suggested setting up a 'Friends of Tenterden Cinema' Group to help promote the project; Fran Sharp and other members commented that this might be a bit premature. It was agreed that there needed to be more publicity and Sue suggested setting up a '.co.uk' website with a page that diverts footfall to the Cinema Focus Group page on the Town Council's website. Sue commented that the Town Council would own the domain name for now until the new Company is set up. Claire agreed to check this with the Town Clerk.

7.2 Mike reported that he had suggested at a recent Town Council meeting having 'mood boards' around the Town which would be rotated between the three main noticeboards. These would be visual updates for each Focus Group.

## **8. Focus Group Membership.**

8.1 Mike suggested holding the next meeting in the Refectory which is based in the Kirk Building at Homewood School at around 4pm to hopefully engage attendance from pupils.

8.2 Colin Campbell reported that the Tenterden Arts Society does not wish to join the Focus Group as they prefer not to be attached to other organisations.

8.3 Tom reported that it would be useful to start work early on plans for formation of a new Company and who should be involved was discussed. Tom suggested Sue Ferguson as one member. Mike commented that the new Company set up is the most important and there needs to be a brainstorming session and targeted questions to pose to Whitehead Monkton. Chris Head reported that there needs to be preliminary thinking of fundraising.

Fran Sharp was keen to join a fundraising group. Mike was happy to be involved and Sue would join the new Company formation group.

Nic Phillips suggested that the Focus Group kept going as we currently were for a few more months until the results of the pre-application are received.

**9. Any Other Business.**

9.1 Barbara Lawrence reported that she was a very active member of the U3A (and so was Tom Evans) and suggested a presentation to both groups (Tenterden & Weald) to get more people involved. Sue reported that Lindsay Hammond had gone round to all the local groups with regard to the Church re-ordering to drum up support.

**10. Date of Next Meeting.** Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 at 4pm. This will possibly take place at Homewood School, but needs to be confirmed.