



DOLPHINS HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

New Church Street, Tetbury, GL8 8DS

Charity Number: 274956



Dolphins Recreation Centre
Dolphins Hall
New Church Street
Tetbury
GL8 8DS

c/o Chief Executive Officer
Tetbury Town Council
The Old Courthouse
63 Long Street
Tetbury GL8 8AA

Monday 21st December 2020

Dear Councillors

It saddens us that we find ourselves having to write this letter, however we have reached the stage where elements of Tetbury Town Council will seemingly stop at nothing to see the Redevelopment Project at the Dolphins Recreation Centre fail. We are therefore making one more final public plea to each of you as individual councillors, to use your powers to get this moving once again.

Our original request for our allocated S106 funding to be forward to the trust was made on 3rd May 2020 (233 days ago). As part of these discussions, Tetbury Town Council agreed to ensure the funds would be available as soon as our planning application was approved by Cotswold District Council. Our planning application was approved on 26th August 2020 (118 days ago), yet none of the outstanding amount of £523,266 S106 funding has yet been provided to us.

The Mayor, in a meeting on 18th December 2020, confirmed a decision to forward all the funds had still not been made and the Council will not be forwarding any funds this calendar year. She also confirmed the Council are unable to provide a letter of assurance confirming the funds will be released for Project 1 of the Redevelopment Project before the year is out.

This means the delays and inability of Tetbury Town Council to make a decision on a proposal put forward 233 days ago, is now costing the community money.

We have long advised that until the trust has the assurances of the funds being released by the Council, that we are unable to place our tender contracts. A failure to sign these contracts this year, prior to Brexit, will see an expected rise in raw material costs of 10%. To a project of this size, that will be an additional cost of tens of thousands of pounds. That's additional funding which this trust, and this community, will need to raise and only because the Council have not done what they said they would do.

While Tetbury Town Council have been unable to find the time to arrange for these funds to be forwarded at any point within the last 233 days, we note time has been managed to be found to 'achieve' a number of other things:

- Councillor [REDACTED] has complained to Gloucestershire County Council, as confirmed by County Councillor [REDACTED], regarding what he considers the "misuse" of the £225,000 grant (commonly known by residents as the 'youth club' grant) towards the Community, Youth & Sports Complex. Councillor [REDACTED] claimed the money should be spent towards a Community Hall, although an internal audit conducted by the County Council proved his claims incorrect.
- Councillor [REDACTED] has raised complaints to the Charity Commission about the running of the trust to attempt to get the trust's powers of operation reduced so that the Redevelopment Project could be stopped, a fact validated by the Mayor on 18th December 2020. Again, following a review, his claims were found to be incorrect and the Charity Commission confirmed they have no regulatory concerns with how the trust is being run.
- Councillor [REDACTED] has threatened and attempted to blackmail the Chair of Trustees via email. These emails were shared with the Mayor and the CEO on 14th July 2020 and it was confirmed an independent investigation would take place, which could end up with disciplinary action being taken. On 18th December (157 days later), the Mayor confirmed she had yet to commence this investigation. This is worrying as during this time Councillor [REDACTED] has continued to influence votes and debates on the Dolphins Recreation Centre.



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- Councillors [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have publicly attacked numerous members of the public who support the project on social media, referring to individuals as white settlers, snakes and accusing them of fraud. Given it is our understanding that previous inappropriate social media postings by [REDACTED] have incurred legal costs for both Tetbury Town Council and the trust, it is worrying he continues to post such offensive content while holding a public position as a councillor.
- Councillors [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] orchestrated a social media campaign to slander the trust around attendance at the Remembrance Day service. This activity involved Councillors [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] coordinating a photo after the ceremony had finished and re-picking up a wreath after it had been laid. A stunt your own Chief Executive Officer agreed was 'disgusting'.
- Councillors [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have made a total of 26 factually inaccurate statements about the Dolphins Recreation Centre during various public meetings of the Council. A complaint and request for an apology in respect of each of these was logged with Tetbury Town Council on 17th October 2020 (66 days ago), yet a review of the complaint and a response has yet to be received.

We are therefore disappointed to note that while the Council has been unable to make meaningful progress with releasing S106 funding – a process it has managed to facilitate on other projects and indeed to the Dolphins Recreation Centre quickly under previous leadership – councillors have still found plenty of time to attempt to discredit the trust and prevent the Redevelopment Project. This is of course, despite publicly claiming to be 100% supportive of the project.

We would also note we have a total of 30 outstanding queries and agreed actions sat awaiting completion with the Council, the oldest dating back to 1st June 2020 (202 days old). Included in this figure is a number of corrections required to incorrect press statements issued by the Council which have damaged the trust's reputation and could impact further funding if left unaddressed.

Also included in this figure is a total of 12 Freedom of Information requests which law dictates must be responded to within 20 working days. We understand the Information Commissioner wrote to the Council in September reminding you of your responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, yet our oldest such request is over 200 days old.

All of the above results in us having serious concerns with the ability of the Council to function as a public body. While you as a councillor may not have been involved in these actions, or indeed maybe even not aware of them, they are happening within your term and ultimately, sadly reflect upon all of you as members of the corporate body.

We are therefore calling for an independent review into the actions noted within this letter and the Council's handling of the forwarding of S106 funding to the Dolphins Recreation Centre. We are asking for each of you, as councillors, to call an emergency meeting as soon as possible, to propose this review and even more importantly, to request for a letter of assurance to be issued to the Dolphins Recreation Centre to confirm all S106 funding will be forwarded as requested to Project 1. We are of course happy to work with the Council to provide any audit trail of usage of the funds as required.

If we get a letter of assurance in time to place our tender contracts before the end of the year, we might just be able to save this town a significant sum of money.

Over 1,200 of the local community have petitioned you to release these funds and supported the Redevelopment Project at every turn. Please don't let a handful of councillors, with a conflict of interest given their previous roles within the trust, stop what could be a transformational project and multi-million pound investment for our community.

A copy of our letter has also been sent to Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP and the Local Government Ombudsman.

I would like to end by wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, while hoping for a more positive and collaborative relationship between our two organisations in 2021.

Yours sincerely

Steve Scott
Chair of Trustees