

## Update on Bingley Priestthorpe Annex: proposals relating to a new grant scheme

### Intro

This report addresses the decision of Bradford Council/the trustees of Priestthorpe Annex to use the proceeds from the sale of the building on Mornington Road to create a grant scheme. The decision is not satisfactory and the grant scheme has many flaws and questions that mean it is not in the best interests of Bingley. Therefore, several recommendations are made.

### Meeting: 30 May 2019

I went to the meeting of Bradford Council's Regulatory and Appeals Committee (30 May 2019), sitting as trustees of the Priestthorpe Annex, which was deciding what to do with the £226K proceeds from the sale of the building (now demolished) on Mornington Road.

Under the original 19<sup>th</sup> century founding trust documents, the building had to be used for the 'education benefit of the people of Bingley'. The trustees decided last year when they allowed its sale and demolition, the sale proceeds should be used for same purpose.

The trustees (7 Bradford Met councillors) resolved to invest the £226K proceeds and dole out annually the interest as grants for educational projects in Bingley. This was one of the three options outlined in a report to the trustees\* and recorded in a decision document\*\*.

The trustees also considered three applications from parties that had expressed interest in receiving funds. Although no accounts were made available, the trustees thought that around £2K had been accrued in interest on the £226K since November 2018 when the annex sale occurred. The trustees awarded £6K (interest plus a bit of capital) split equally (£2K) to each of the following:

- **Friends of Bingley Pool** to provide swimming lessons for adults and children (even though they're not in a position to do this as they don't manage the pool and are currently negotiating a CAT)
- **Myrtle Park Primary School** for outdoor equipment (the school requested more funding)
- **The Down Syndrome Training and Support** service on Whitley Street. This was given £2k as a special case because they didn't specifically apply for 'things' but support to provide their service. The Trustees announced that the money had to be spent on objects, not staff or services.

### Outcomes and impacts

This outcome, distributing a total of £6K, was disappointing to those who had bid for funding, investing time and effort in the process, being led to believe that larger sums could be available.

The Friends of Bingley Pool, for example, have told the solicitor for the Trustees that they can't accept the cheque as they do not yet have control over the timetable at Bingley Pool and do not provide lessons there. The Friends describe the Trustees decision to give them £2K a bizarre and unwelcome outcome from this process and that the outcome is insulting to those at FOBP who are engaged in the time consuming and serious process of community asset transfer. FOBP questions if the trustees actually read the feasibility study for the CAT of the pool and have underlined that there will be no facility in Bingley to provide school swimming lessons without the asset transfer of Bingley

Pool. FOBP have asked if the £2000 could be used to help with the process of asset transfer as that would be a very small benefit.

The grant scheme, at present, is also unsatisfactory in many other ways. The Priestthorpe Annex, a magnificent and iconic 19<sup>th</sup> century building had to be sold and demolished as the result of negligence over many years by Bradford Council, not helped by the fudging of the roles of the council and the trustees, and the failure of each to carry out their responsibilities until encouraged to do so by Bingley Town Council. For example, there is no record that Bradford Council ever paid rent to the Trust for using the building from the 1970s (when Bradford Councillors became the trustees) until the building shut in 2002. It was Bradford Council (or was it the trustees?) that decided to remove the building's roof in 2009 hastening its demise and descent into dereliction. Again, there seems to be no public record of this decision and the reasons behind it.

The progress the trustees and Bradford Council have made in relation to the Annex since 2016 by responding to the requests from the Town Council to assume some responsibility is welcome. However, the manner in which the new grant scheme was concocted, seemingly 'on the hoof' at the meeting on 30 May gives little confidence that a new era of good stewardship by the trustees is about to start.

In principle, setting up a grant scheme may seem a reasonable idea, especially as Bradford Council is to provide the administrative support needed and cover all running costs, including indemnity insurance in case HM Treasury asks for the 19<sup>th</sup> century loans to be repaid.

However, there are so many questions and, crucially, the proceeds of this sale of Priestthorpe Annex make a pot of cash for Bingley. It's Bingley money for the educational benefit of Bingley people. This grant scheme means Bradford Council firmly keeps control. The trustees even dismissed a suggestion that representatives from Bingley should also sit on the Trust saying Bingley people could not be impartial and may have a vested interest in how the money is spent!

The trustees decided to use as a guide to determine who would be eligible to apply for a grant the Bingley boundaries from two 19<sup>th</sup> century maps. It wasn't clear which boundary will be used and exactly which areas of present day Bingley are included – and which not. It could be that Crossflatts, Micklethwaite, parts of Cottingley and Eldwick are excluded. (Maps are in the public reports pack.)

## **Summary and recommendation**

Those of us who invested time and effort attending the meeting on 30 May and making submissions felt the trustees had made a decision to cook up the grant scheme before the public part of the meeting began. The result was flawed and ill thought out. Bingley deserves better.

**The recommendation is that Bingley Town Council writes to the trustees and solicitor dealing with this matter and asks the trustees:**

**1. To provide all the following information about the Trust and grant scheme within the next three months:**

- the name of the Trust and the grant scheme
- the registration number of the trust with the Charity Commission and/or other appropriate bodies
- what criteria will be used to award grants

- how big an individual grant can be
- the Trust's investment strategy, taking into account ESG criteria (environment and social impacts and governance)
- where exactly/in which bank account the sale proceeds from the Annex will be held
- what protections there are for the monies over the £85,000 protected under the FCSC scheme
- the Trust's governance arrangements
- where and when the Trust's accounts will be published
- what indemnity insurance has been purchased and at what cost
- what will happen to the money if HM Treasury asks for reimbursement
- who the members of the trust board are, why they're appointed, their term of office and their register of interests.

## **2. To make the following amendments:**

- the £2000 granted to FOBP can be used to help with the process of asset transfer of the pool.
- the trustees should not only be Bradford Councillors but should include in their number representatives from Bingley (perhaps Town Councillors but not necessarily) who are not connected with Bradford Council
- ensure that a deserving project with clear support from local people can receive a substantial grant from the capital as well as interest accrued.
- to use 21<sup>st</sup> century boundaries to define Bingley and to consult on whether people wish the grant area to be Bingley centre, excluding Gilstead, Eldwick, Crossflatts, Micklethwaite and Cottingley, or for the grant area to mirror that of Bingley parish created in 2016.
- the Trust will convene in Bingley, not Bradford City Hall.

## **3. To consider having discussions with Bingley Town Council about transferring the sale proceeds to the Town Council's stewardship.**

- there are considerable resource implications for the Town Council in managing a sum such as this, however if the Trustees indicated they would be prepared to have discussions about transferring the funds, the Town Council could decide whether or not to proceed and a full scoping exercise could be carried out.

The trustees decided that the next deadline for grant applications will be 31 Jan 2020. So, there is plenty of time to create a grant scheme to serve the educational needs of the people of Bingley properly, as those who built the annex back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would wish. I feel they would take a dim view of decisions about their investment in the education of people in Bingley being made in Bradford by remote trustees.

\* Public reports pack 30052019 1015 Regulatory and Appeals Committee.pdf).

\*\* Decisions 30052019 1015 Regulatory and Appeals Committee (1).pdf

RD. June 2019