**POLICY COMMITTEE 28 Jan 2013**

**BEEHIVE GOVERNANCE GROUP: AN UPDATE**

**Note by Nick Cornwell, Chair of Policy Committee and Governance Group, 21 January 2013**

This note aims to summarise progress so far of the Governance Group and to give notice of a number of issues that may need to be clarified or decided over the next few months.

Background

The Beehive Governance Group have met twice, in November and December. From the first meeting (Cllrs Ash, Cornwell, Harman, with Lyn advising, plus Michael Teare and John Burgess from FoB) we recommended to Policy Committee the setting up of a company, owned by HTC and limited by guarantee, to run the Beehive. This recommendation was resolved by Full Council in December. This means that the Council wouldn’t be liable for any debts the company incurred, beyond £1. This company should be set up once there is a need for it to trade.

At the second meeting (Cllrs Ash, Cornwell, Harman, Whitlock, plus John Burgess from FoB), we ranged over various matters, mainly to do with fundraising and how we could afford to appoint a manager in advance of the opening. Cllrs Ash (an FoB member) & Cornwell have subsequently met with an FoB trustee to discuss grant applications for fitting-out, manager, etc.

Issues

1. ***The governance model***

The main issue here is concern that Town Council control of the Beehive (rather than separate charity control) appears to rule out a number of opportunities for obtaining grants. However, Policy Committee and Council made their recommendations/decisions in full knowledge of this. The sense of the meetings was that as Council had been taking the lead for such a long time, it should continue to do so until, say, a group from the community positively came forward and offered to run the Beehive under charity auspices. Moreover, in these straitened times, grant applications, whether from charities or non-charities, are less likely to be successful than in better times; so the scope for grant applications shouldn’t be given undue weight in determining the governance model.

1. ***Structure*** These notes reflect and build on discussions so far, but are not intended to exclude other options.
- It would seem that a Board of eight directors would be about right – five from HTC and three from FoB, all appointments to be agreed by Full Council. If that seems too many, the minimum should probably be 3 + 2.
- The Advisory Group underneath the director-tier should comprise a range of people skilled in different fields. They would not be allowed to represent particular organisations, but would be experts in their own right. Depending on the agenda for each board meeting, the relevant advisory group expert(s) should attend board meetings in a non-voting advisory capacity.
- Additionally, or alternatively, there could be sub-committees making recommendations to the main board or advisory group on particular areas of responsibility.

- There should be board or advisory group meetings with a liaison group comprising all user-groups about twice a year.

*I suggest we should be sharing these ideas with the various interest/user groups* at the meeting we plan to hold soon after the building contract is let.

1. ***Fundraising***
This is primarily a separate FoB matter rather than a governance matter. However, HTC or the new ltd company need to keep in close touch with FoB over the precise elements of equipment etc that need funding beyond what is in the building contract. This would help FoB to target their efforts as effectively as possible.

*I suggest we should also be raising these matters with the various interest/user groups* at the meeting mentioned above. The groups may have their own ideas on how best to raise some of the parcels of funding, and may be able to help.
2. ***Staffing and operational matters***This far in advance of the new company being set up it’s premature to be making definitive decisions about these matters. But there are important principles to be addressed over the next few months, including the nature of service level and any other agreements between HTC and the company; when a manager might be appointed; and whether the café should be run under a franchise or another arrangement.

Nick Cornwell

Chair

21 January 2013