

## RYE LEISURE CENTRE

### Report from Project Managers to Working Group & Rye Town Council August 2023

|      |                                                |
|------|------------------------------------------------|
| CC   | Charity Commission                             |
| CIO  | Charitable Incorporated Organisation           |
| ESCC | East Sussex County Council                     |
| FL   | Freedom Leisure                                |
| JUA  | Joint Use Agreement                            |
| PM   | Project Managers                               |
| PSDS | Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme           |
| RA   | Rye Academy                                    |
| RDC  | Rother District Council                        |
| RMH  | Rye, Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital |
| RTC  | Rye Town Council                               |
| WG   | Working Group                                  |

#### Situation status

Progress has slowed down since the initial push from April to June. This is largely because we are at the negotiating stage with ESCC and RDC and are dependent on their responses before we can act further.

#### *RDC*

Senior officers have been extremely helpful and supportive. They very much want the CIO to take on the centre. This is largely financially driven but also because they can see the upside of us working with stakeholders for the wider benefit of the community.

RDC are trying to get the pool open this year. This would enable the CIO to take over a 'going concern' rather than getting it up and running after nearly a year. RDC are fully aware they have dilapidations responsibilities at the completion of the current leases and licences. Many of these will show up once the pool has come out of its moth-balled state. They very much want the CIO to take over next year and have bought us some flexibility on timing through their negotiations with FL.

The government announced a few months ago that they would give £63m to pools. Stage 1 is £20m for urgent utilities costs. RDC have made an application and will know the outcome at the end of September. This would go to FL for their bills. Phase 2 has not yet been opened and is for green initiatives on energy with a sum of £43m to distribute.

RDC are conducting a leisure facilities survey prior to budget setting, and we will know the outcome of cabinet's decision around January 2024. ESCC wish to see the outcome of this before making any further decisions.

#### *ESCC*

We have held a number of Teams meetings with ESCC about the lease, and this has slowed down our progress. Whilst there is a valid lease in place, they are reluctant to make moves, however, they are now about to approach RTC for information to help it determine the viability of RTC taking over from RDC as the lease holder (with the CIO taking over from FL). This will take time and of course the devil will be in the detail. ESCC are, rightly, concerned about detail, however, this means that we are not able to bid for government funding for decarbonising the site this year, which could have given us a grant of just over £1m. As there are four leases/licenses on the whole site, getting these amalgamated into one

document will take time and, preferably, we would like ESCC to be preparing that now. The CIO is hamstrung without a lease as no one will, rightly, give grant funding if they cannot see longevity in the site.

We have written to the CEO and Leader of ESCC asking for an in-person meeting with them plus the Leader and CEO of RDC for high level talks. To date we have not received a response to this request, but had emails from Cllr Glazier and one of his senior officers, repeating that ESCC will be guided by the outcome of RDC's 2024-25 Budget Setting process – particularly in respect of leisure services. It is essential that we keep stressing at every meeting that time is of the essence. Whilst ESCC officers recognise our frustration at not being able to move on, in return they insist that proper protocols for the transference of the lease have to be followed.

### *CIO*

The CC state that it is a minimum of 8 weeks to turn around an application for a CIO. After 10 weeks they asked us for: a copy of the lease; a safeguarding policy; and our charitable charges. The latter two have been prepared by Dan. We await to hear from them whether they require more information or whether our CIO is registered. This document, together with the RDC letter will, at least, allow us to get on with some small-scale fundraising, but larger charities such as the Lottery/Comic relief/ etc will require more detail.

### *Dilapidations*

RMH has funded a very full conditions survey and energy audit from DMA surveyors, and we now have that report. This contains red, amber, green flags on what is urgent, and the final costing details are pending. ESCC conducted a conditions survey several months ago. This has now been shared with RDC and they are evaluating it. The project managers have not seen it. Much of the machinery is at its life end, and there is a list in the leases of who is responsible for replacing what. RDC seems prepared to give the CIO an agreed sum to remedy the situation, which we would prefer because we can use local experts who care about the site, rather than having to accept RDC's-appointed contractors.

### *Funding*

Whilst fundraising for decarbonisation takes a back seat until we hear further from ESCC, we can start to raise some money for working capital. Whilst many of the grant giving bodies will fund activities and kit, it is a little harder to build a war chest of working capital, however, not impossible. A concerted effort to start this will begin in September as we have a database now of over 200 grant giving bodies to apply to. We will work closely with Veronique, who has been with ESCC for many, many years and is an expert on fundraising. She has been very helpful thus far.

The deadline for the CIL application to RDC is 1<sup>st</sup> September.

### *Business plan*

Several drafts of the business plan have been produced and it has been shared, on a confidential basis, with RDC and ESCC (in support of lease negotiations) and Swim England (to secure advice and guidance). At an appropriate point the latest version will be presented to RTC for its approval (prior to agreement on leases and dilapidations – and after CIO registration).

We have spoken positively with the CEO of the Pelham Centre about extending our remit into youth outreach work.

### Next Steps

- Await to receive the response from the CC on the completion of the registration of the CIO.

- Await to hear from RDC on their discussions with ESCC, their internal discussions, and a date for the pool to open.
- Compare ESCC conditions survey with DMA's (which the working group commissioned, funded by RMH)
- Start building a war chest of working capital (commitments – the CIO does not yet have a bank account)
- Continue to develop the business plan.
- Start community engagement once we are sure we are taking on the project.

**Rebekah Gilbert, Dan Lynn**