

Mr Steve Gray
Chief Executive/Town Clerk
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Dear Steve

Assembly Hall, Melksham – potential Feasibility Study

Thank you for your time on Monday morning, and indeed for the initial invitation to meet you to discuss the possible project at the Assembly Hall (and Town Hall too perhaps) in Melksham.

As discussed we have prepared a submission document to illustrate our response to your invitation to tender to provide Lead Consultant, Architect, Arts Business Planning and Cost Consultant services in the preparation of a formal Feasibility Study to explore the potential for the future of the Hall(s). Hopefully the contents make sense even though they aren't (yet) tuned to any real delivery programme and fully defined scope – they very soon could be!

We have excluded any description of the process we would envisage leading up to the point where such a response becomes more formal and hence the purpose of this covering letter. It seemed sensible to keep the process guidance separate from the response. You can use the submission document to demonstrate to colleagues and elected members what they might expect if you invoke a formal competitive process and the following guidance to explain to them how you might get there. Some of the following may seem utterly obvious and therefore superfluous but you'd be surprised how often processes get derailed by the realisation late in the process that there is no funding or the key decision maker in the client body is on holiday when the selection of consultants needs authorisation causing all sorts of delay and abortive effort on all sides!

Next steps to establish support and/or instructions to proceed to competitive tenders for provision of Consultancy Services:

1. Confirm support for formal Feasibility Study from Council;
2. Establish budget for Study costs - deciding what services you require and the nature of deliverables you expect from each consultant you decide to include in the professional team (for example do you want Architect, Quantity Surveyor and Business Planner or just two of those core 3 consultancies or just the Architect?);
3. Confirm funding is in place to pay for the study and decide if you want to declare the budget available for the fees;
4. Establish criteria by which appointment will be made (including for example proportion of assessment of tenders for quality versus cost – is the best tender the cheapest one basically and are you obliged only to accept the lowest tender?)

5. Confirm information that must be supplied with tender returns (methodology statement, team CVs, relevant experience examples, references, fees, and outline programme – i.e, much as our document). We have seen ITTs that invite initial design concept responses but to be honest we frown upon such unofficial design competitions and would urge you to keep it as simple as you can to keep everyone's cost exposure to a minimum;
6. Identify 3 or more Architectural Practices with relevant experience who you will invite to tender and decide upon tender period (usually 3 or 4 weeks for a study such as this but could be a lot less – it's entirely dependent on how fast you want to run but if there are any tenderers who haven't visited the site you should make allowance in the tender period for them to do so);
7. Decide if you want to interview the tenderers and/or invite them to give a presentation of their submission and set a firm date for this to happen;
8. Identify individual or group who will have delegated authority from the Town Council to make the selection decision and ensure they understand the prupose and objectives of the process;
9. Ensure all individuals who will be part of the tender returns and selection process are available from the date of tender return to date of appointment of preferred consultant (and team);

Once you've done all that you're ready to invite tenders by clearly expressing the information that is pertinent as a result of the above process and including (as you did for us) any background to the project objectives that will inform the tender responses. Sit back and relax for a couple of weeks and then do the assessments of returned tenders in a methodical and recorded manner before choosing who you feel will give you the best service and outcome for the project.

With a bit of luck that might be us! We would be extremely proud to be entrusted with the Study and any capital project that may ensue but in the meantime we are grateful for the opportunity to talk you through this process and hope the information provided here and in our submission document is sufficiently clear to help you move the project forward to the next exciting stage.

If you have any queries or need clarification of anything we've sent to you today don't hesitate to contact me and I'll gladly expand and provide further answers.

Yours faithfully



Rob Firman
Director
for Austin-Smith:Lord LLP