

KMC 2012

KMC was formed in 2002 making this a 10 year struggle, to oppose a plan to demolish the Baths and take the site out of public ownership and radically altering the public open space surrounding it.

Within the first 2 years it raised enough resources and funding to host a packed out meeting at Reading Town Hall, to bring together a very large petition signed by Readingensians, and presented at the Parliament and then further public meetings to which all were invited.

During the boom years KMC asked RBC to consider either doing the Baths up - itself or working in a similar way to that which has been seen to work at Caversham Court; using public to legitimise applications for grants.

Since the commercial development that RBC thought was the right one for the Baths, failed to match up to RBC's expectations, another period of waiting has started. RBC gave KMC a concession to raise funds and find a means to convince them that a multi-use community facility was the right one for there. KMC was further given the job to find legal fees to broker a deal of leasing the site and taking the building as-it-was and is. KMC were to be expected to accept the duties and obligations of RBC on this site; that is to say reverse at the very least the decay since the date of listing.

RBC arranged monthly meetings to monitor and control KMC activities. At our first meeting we asked to meet with RBC's fund finding officer -and left that meeting feeling assured that RBC would be nudging us regularly with news of fund opportunities.

Other key meetings and proposals were put to RBC which would have led to new avenues for funding. One key one, for which RBC has expertise, is in youth training, and for which internal funding is created from government sources. KMC and its partners look up to RBC for leadership.

Another key area of direction that KMC has looked up to RBC for help in, is in the town's sports development; in particular in the re-provisioning of facilities on KM for the sports pitches. Here I must point out strongly that the figures that have been banded about for the total cost to KMC of £1.5-2.5m have been **heavily weighted** by a gesture by ourselves to be fully inclusive of a new changing facility, toilets and café for the park. The pool repairs could comfortably be funded for less than £750k. RBC has conceded that the existing changing portacabin is past its expiry date and is a blot on the landscape. Maintenance and security of this attachment goes hand-in-hand with the Baths and would benefit from a joint approach when it comes to planning.

KMC self-funded the development of plans/drawing and advertising material worth thousands of pounds. Research and development costs and internal cleaning of the building has been done solely by KMC and its partners. However we did rely on RBC to arrange a skip to remove the rubbish left by the last tenant. KMC has a very detailed report on the building condition which has taken months to produce. KMC has continued to obtain costings even though RBC actually commissioned its own expensive surveys which did not focus on how *to* repair but purely on *how* bad the building was. RBC continued to protect its interests with a survey that studied the subsoil ground potential outside the building and has now installed scaffolding inside the shell of the building that gives no protection from the ingress of water leading to more substantial decay of the timbers. None of the subsequent works

of RBC is aiding a feasibility study or a even method study of how to arrest the decay. However, we have been released under FOI a letter from EH blaming the deterioration to the building since listing squarely on the Council.

KMC found national experts in sport and leisure who gave their verdict that this building could be a gem for community use. The local press kindly heralded this as a *this or that*. KMC approached the national sports funding organisation prior to the Olympic year but were not eligible because the building was in no-state to contribute to this national event, nor could it possibly be rapidly turned around in a year. The range of community activities that it could serve, if it were restored, cannot be denied.

KMC offered suggestions as to how to help protect the building from vandalism, graffiti and crime. In January KMC won a grant toward installing CCTV but this relied on RBC helping in the provision of power to the plant room. KMC has even offered to pay for the overhead costs of the supply, and had obtained goodwill visits from the SEB to help make it all safe. Sadly the progress halted because the roof above was leaking too badly to make the installation safe.

KMC had proposed to RBC to help, provided they could help too. We set up a team project to make new coping stones. This was a youth project. The results can be seen on the plant room wall. KMC funded the total cost of these stones and their installation. RBC in August said that they would repair the leaks but this job remains to do.

With regard to the fundraising, these are detailed in the main, by the officer reports. KMC remained willing to take on any menial

work to raise funds and happily cleared litter after a public event. Thanks in particular to Debi Daniels for trusting us to help at her event. We asked in plenty of time to work with RBC during the Rock Festival on clearing up on the Meadow but were disappointed to hear later that RBC had gone out to an employment agency for casual untrained staff and paid a substantial amount which could have instead gone towards the Baths.

I must emphasise that the local community, who visit our numerous open days have given very generously in the expectation that the RBC will respond favourably and come on board.

Residents are aware of the vocal statement received at the last cabinet meeting and wonder why this was not followed up by more visible support on fundraising days by Members of the Council. A great contrast was evident during the last series of Heritage Open Days for which Reading was a promoter.

On a more positive note, a new era has arrived for community funding. KMC has been already on the receiving end with an award from LawWorks to fund a London Solicitor to help support KMC. Our solicitors Orick, Herrington and Sutcliffe are in discussions with RBC over terms of engagement at present. Another very exciting fund has been won by KMC within the Government scheme of *My Community Rights*. KMC has had **confirmation** that it will be awarded £10,000 to buy a feasibility study and architectural support provided that RBC are willing to engage in a government directive - requiring them to sign up to a scheme of registration for buildings of community interest.

One very substantial fund has only in the last 2 days been announced. KMC could *easily* put a good case to obtain this fund but it would require RBC to be a faithful willing partner.

This would enable a truly incredible scheme to be pioneered in Reading. During the last year KMC has doubled its emphasis on RBC officers to help with their expertise. The scheme would enable the building to be central to a training scheme for the much needy NEETs of the town giving the opportunities to the rising number of young people without either jobs or training. It is essential that RBC takes stock of the rising crisis for young people. Our plan with its existing partners offers initially heritage skills and interaction with local businesses and then a prolonged training in facilities management in the establishment once up and running.

RBC has repeatedly said that KMC does not have the experience and track record in handing the sort of funds that RBC regularly seems to scoop up from such as the Lottery and CLG funds. KMC begs RBC to side with it on this. KMC/RBC cannot deny that only a partnership in forms will sustain and enable a community facility to succeed in the long term. RBC still has energy to follow its own particular projects and has underway applications for other lottery grants.

KMC has tried in every way possible to engage with RBC's executive and Members and bring them to the "Lets Talk" approach for the Baths. We would welcome them to sample the level of enthusiasm and concern that the Baths should be at the heart of the community.

To the public I look to judge whether the goodwill first promised *has* existed over the period of exclusivity given to the KMC.

I leave it for you the Members of the Cabinet to make your decision. If you wish to see a community group succeed, a more helpful and proactive approach in the next phase could be given and the opportunities to do so are in your hands.

