

DEPUTATION FOUR – MORLEY HERITAGE CENTRE

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Make your speech, please, to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes. Please begin by introducing the people in your Deputation.

MR P TRIGWELL: My Lord Mayor and Fellow Councillors, good afternoon. My name is Pete Trigwell. I am the Chair of the Morley Heritage Centre and I would like to introduce you to Mr Bob Beach, who is the Secretary of the Heritage Group, Mr Peter Aldred, who is the President and founder of the Heritage Centre, and Adele O'Donohue, who is our Treasurer.

We would like to express our thanks for this opportunity to speak to you today and I would ask that Leeds City Council listens sympathetically to our concerns that we are going to be raising today about the future and permanence of Morley Heritage Society and that you, as a body of elected officials, give further consideration to these concerns and hopefully will be able to see your way clear to assisting this wonderful group to move forward.

A little about ourselves to start the ball rolling. We are at present a small group of volunteers, eight in total, who assist Peter in the day-to-day running of the centre. You will probably also be able to deduce from our title that we are fully committed to displaying and preserving a written, photographic and oral display of the heritage of Morley and its surrounding areas.

Next, I would now like to tell you a little about how the heritage centre came about. The collection that we have at present on display in a pop-up shop in Queen Street in Morley is the brainchild of the President of the group, Mr Peter Aldred. Peter is a well-known local man who has collected everything and anything to do with Morley for the last 50 years.

Peter has been waiting for more years than he wishes to remember for the opportunity to be allowed to display this collection to the people of Morley for their benefit and enjoyment. I know if it was Peter who was up here speaking to you today he would be the first to admit and say that he is not getting any younger and his wishes are that his collection be preserved for the enjoyment of not only the people of Morley but for the people of all the surrounding areas.

Our vision as a group is that not only do we display this collection, but that we also expand it and we aim to do this by:

1. being committed to further local heritage research in Morley and its surrounding areas;
2. by passing on the experiences of the group and its friends to the younger members of our community by the local schools and youth organisations, whereby they have an understanding of what the local heritage means to them in their present day, and what it means to their parents and grandparents growing up in the same town and areas.

3. We also envisage that we will be able to help people of all ages within our community who may find themselves isolated, for whatever reasons, a place that they can call their own and visit on a regular basis to pass on their own life experiences to different age groups.

As we do not at the moment have any funding, we are for the present a nomadic group. By this, I mean that we have no permanent premises for us to display and carry forward the aims of the group, which we have outlined already. We are currently supported by East Street Arts and it is they that find us the temporary accommodation that we are using at the moment. However, these premises are always subject to availability and, as the local economy seems to be recovering, we expect in the near future we will have nowhere to house this wonderful collection. Just to prove that we are not only here with a cap in hand expecting the Council to sort out all our problems for us, can I let you know that we are in the process of seeking funding from the Lottery Heritage Fund, and are at the moment awaiting a reply from them.

As a group of committed enthusiasts we feel that the centre as we all see it can play an important part in the continuing development of Morley. It has become very apparent in the short time that we have been open to the public that it is a well-supported project. The footfall we are now seeing has steadily increased into hundreds of visitors per week, with over 347 positive and no negative comments having been placed in our visitors' book, which has only been in operation since mid-January.

It would seem that the people of Morley are very much of the opinion that they want somewhere where they can go and look around and talk about their history and heritage. This is only made possible by having such a display within the town centre of Morley. Having it in such a position makes the whole project more accessible to local groups, businesses and schools. It also becomes a place where local people can relate and record their experiences of local events and heritage.

Since applying to appear before you and actually getting here today, we have once again been moved from the premises that we are using at the moment, which was a small shop right in the heart of the town centre. The new premises we occupy, although much bigger in size, which is ideal for the expansion of the collection, is on the second floor, which is by no means an ideal setting for the large number of elderly and vulnerable visitors that we have been attracting. This outlines what I said earlier about us being a nomadic group.

In conclusion, if we are going to progress with this project, then a permanent location is paramount for success. If we have permanence then this centre can continue to develop into the focal point that can be woven into the very fabric of Morley town centre itself. To reiterate on what I said earlier, at this moment in time we do not have the revenue to secure premises, especially in the town centre, where our experience has shown that such a centre would thrive. We would therefore ask the Council to consider allowing the Morley Heritage Centre a permanent location within the town centre and within current Council owned property.

Thank you for allowing us to appear before you today and stating our case for permanent premises. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon and thank you for coming. Thank you. (*Applause*)