

L.F.M.C EXECUTIVE MEETING
Minutes 18, July 91

Present : Directors; Clare Barwel, Christian Anstice.
Executive; Gina Czarnecki, Anna Thew, Martin Lugg, Karen
Smith, Emina Kurtagic, Tanya Syed, Mark Sheehan.
Staff ; Vicky Smith, Sandy Weiland, Tony Warcus.
Members ; Annabel Nicolson, Cordelia Swann, Tom Heslop,
Philip Sanderson, Ilias Pantos.
BFI ; Irene Whitehead, Ian Christie, Jim Pines.
Arts Council; Dave Curtis.
R.P.Ms

Meeting starts at 7.00 pm.
Apologies; James Hutchinson, Jonh Tappendon.
Chair ; Christian Anstice.
Minutes ; Tanya Syed, Ilias Pantos.

Due to circumstances, it was agreed to postpone previous minutes and departmental reports, to the next exec. meeting.
Thanks voiced by Chair to Irene Whitehead, Ian Cristie, Jim Pines and Dave Curtis for attending the meeting.
The representatives of the BFI were asked to expand on letter dated , sent to exec. and staff prior to meeting.

Ian Cristie explained the importance of the Co-op in relation to BFI revenue funding, i.e. it being the third largest client, and expressed his interest that the funding be used properly. He also referred to Co-op management, i.e. the relationship between staff and exec., and called for better communication. He stated that the scheme for the new building should not stretch the financial state of the Co-op, nor change the Co-op itself. He was interested in the Co-op's reaction to the new building.

Irene Whitehead then proceeded to give background information on the building search. i.e. first looked into possibility of LFMC and LVA being housed together, then appointed RPM to look into building options. e.g. B.R. selling present building, the Half Moon, Diarama. They have since looked with LFMC, LVA and BFI for viable buildings. She stated that the Dunn&Co building looks financially and spatially attractive ; BFI provides rent for LFMC and LVA.

; building provides space for MDA plus other revenue areas to offset the rent.

; landlord provides £ 375000 for refurbishment

BFI would adjust grant to correspond to new rent.

She also stated, that £20 000 had already been invested, and the BFI were not putting forward any more money for further building search.

-Information about Co-op's requirements and concerns regarding new building, written by members of exec., was distributed to guests

Gina then read out main reservations stated at the previous exec. meeting, (see files), e.g. what would happen if the Co-op declined offer?

Irene replied that BFI commitment would decline because it has already gone through a long and expensive project.

Martin suggested that making a decision tonight would be hasty, and commented that the commitment of the BFI via its subsidy will be enormous and asked how long this commitment would last.

Sandy said that she had the impression that as well as the £375000, there would be additional money from the BFI for cinema. Irene replied that a company, (MDA or other), would manage the building, part of which would be available for rental. The money gained would then become part of the subsidy for the Co-op, therefore guaranteeing a continuation of commitment. It was also stated that apart from the landlords investment no further monies would be given from the BFI for building refurbishment.

At this point questions opened to the floor for RPMs.

Main concerns were:

a) since no preliminary costing has been done, can we be sure that £375000 will cover all actual expenses?

b) has LVA's need to move quickly been considered, and will their time schedule for refurbishment correspond, or will LVA be temporarily re-housed?

c) have our installation space requirements been discussed with BFI?

d) would the desired installation space be taken from our office' space or an alternative area ?

e) how many buildings have you looked at?

RPMs stated that they have only dealt with the landlord in the outlining of the proposition and have not entered detailed negotiations. RPMs replied that the detailed reworking of the space will take place in stage two and that the exhibition space will then be dealt with. Irene added, that it would probably come from office space, and that MDAs space would basically remain intact. (200ft give or take).

RPMs informed us that they investigated approximately fifty buildings, out of which only five appeared to be suitable.

Anna voiced that the RPMs have not been provided with adequate information about our requirements, and proceeded to state relevant cinema details (see files).

The discussion then focussed on cinema.

Ian Christie asked what was the current level of attendance at Co-op cinema screenings. Response : average of 30 to 40, or 100 at special events .

One of the considerations voiced was whether the Co-op cinema would maintain its autonomy. Philip asked if the BFI intended to use the cinema space as an alternative preview cinema (like the Bijou).

The BFI reps. response was that the Co-op should maintain its control over the cinema space, but did not exclude the possibility of it been hired out by MDA.

Disbelief was expressed by Irene and Jim at the Co-ops attitude towards the Dunn&Co building. It was said, that although disputes with all buildings are inevitable, they hoped that the Co-op would enter the deal with a spirit of commitment and it would be a shame if it declined.

Dave Curtis voiced what he considered to be positive aspects of the Dunn&Co building: a) major improvements with both sound and vision, b) raked seating would improve the space, c) being in conjunction with different organisations in one building.

Other points made :

Vicky; the general membership should be consulted.

Martin; accounted to the meeting his experience of building search, i.e. five buildings, most promising one in Clercenwell. RPM suggested that this information was brought to them to discuss and clarify prior to meeting.

Annabel; concerned that if we end up with an inflexible cinema then the radical work will go elsewhere.

It was voiced that the exec. were being rushed into making a major decision without substantial information, noting that it had only been consulted two weeks prior. A request of one weeks postponement of the vote was made. Irene replied that negotiation with staff had been in practice for months and pressed that a decision should therefore be made promptly. As she stated earlier, if the lease was not signed soon we could lose the building. She concluded by saying that if the Co-op declined, the BFI would go ahead with the project.

At that point, Irene, Jim and the RPMs had to leave the meeting. (Exit at 8.45pm).

The discussion continued with questions to Ian Christie from the floor. The main questions and concerns voiced were:

1. If the Co-op does not accept the Dunn&Co building, how will this affect its funding?
2. The money for refurbishing the building are possibly going to be spent in creating a limited cinema space, therefore eliminating possibilities for 35mm and Scope projections which the Co-op is interested to accommodate in the near future.
3. The existing unique practice of the Co-op as a cinema-performance space is one of its main differential aspects to all other venues. As it is well known, a certain space forms and reflects the work that takes place in it. Cordelia, as an ex-cinema organiser, stressed the fact that the proposed small preview cinema space for single screen projections will only affect the Co-ops work in a negative way. *agreed - will need to see how much screen projection*
4. Why is the BFI insisting so much on this particular building, when it offers so much more space than needed, (extra floors), as well as a considerable set of drawbacks?

Ian's response to the above was as follows:

He pointed out that a capital block of investment for the Co-op building was only going to come through a pack of money being part of a more general deal, such as the LFMC, LVA and MDA scheme.

He also stressed that the revenue funding of the Co-op hasn't been properly adjusted, mainly because of its uniqueness in practice, and that a reset of the Co-ops funding has to take place in the near future. Such a reset could be either way, (increased or decreased), and should be calculated in comparison to other organisations.

Other points mentioned were that,:

a) although the auditorium is an important space, the Co-op should also find other places to screen work. b) it should be clear that there will be no more money spent on the RPM for locating an alternative building, should the Dunn&Co building be refused. c) the uncertainty and indecision of the Co-op are worrying and have been a negative factor in this whole scheme.

He concluded saying that the Dunn&Co building was considered to be a good deal, since it provided a strong financial packing as well as a secure revenue funding for the Co-op, giving an end to the uncertainties it faces. This deal will also automatically tighten the relationship and cooperation between the BFI and the Co-op.

Lastly, Ian Christie suggested that a group of people with expertise from the Co-op should discuss and collaborate with RPM in order to try and solve the demands of the Co-op for the Dunn&Co building.

During the discussion that followed the main points raised were:

1. Although the Dunn&Co building scheme seems to provide a more secure funding, the independence and autonomy of the Co-op might be in danger, because of this greater financial dependency. Apart from the financial value of this deal there is the artistic value of our work.

2. Although the £375000 have been presented as favourable, no cost for technical and structural alterations has been estimated, nor has any financial survey taken place, showing that at this stage, no one can actually say if the sum is sufficient for the project.

3. The fact that the certainty of this project is to be taken for granted, since the Co-op's rent will be paid through the MDA rent, was doubted, taking upon consideration the implications created if this scheme fails.

Before the vote took place, most present expressed the feeling that the situation left little space, if none, for the Co-op to decide. It was generally thought that there was no room for choice and Philip stressed that, had there been a cinema organiser at that point, the building would have been rejected at first sight.

Lastly, it was said that if the Co-op decides to move into the building, it should try and do it in a positive way, making the most of what it has.

At that point the voting took place.

First it was voted whether the actual vote be delayed for a week.

FOR : 3 , AGAINST : 6 , ABSTENTIONS : 1 .

Second, the vote opened to the whole floor, as to whether the cinema space of the Dunn&Co building was considered suitable for our practices.

FOR : 0 , AGAINST : 10 , ABSTENTIONS : 5 .

Third it was voted, whether the Co-op should move into stage 2 with the Dunn&Co building.

FOR : 7 , AGAINST : 3 , ABSTENTIONS : 0 .

After the vote was taken it was requested by the majority that a note to be made.

'The above decision, taken by the executive, concerning the Dunn&Co building, was taken under great pressure, and the BFI should be aware of that.

At the end of the vote Christian requested that on the following executive meeting, a matter of great importance be investigated and discussed. This concerned the structure of the working relationship of the executive and the staff, particularly in relation to the voting status of paid staff on the exec, as this is contradictory to the charity status of the Co-op.

The meeting continued on the subject of the temporary position for cinema organiser which was proposed and discussed with Cordelia Swann.

Vicky handed in proposal for the 3rd workshop-courses post, which is to be discussed in the next executive meeting.