

Completing a Building Project

Whilst getting funding and permissions in place are a significant part of the project, there is still lots of work to be done before the project is complete.

Appointing a contractor

The appointment of the contractor may be part of your agreement with your architect and they may manage the whole tendering process for you. If that is not what has been agreed, then you may need to put the work out to tender yourself. This can be quite a detailed process and we are not going to describe it fully here but below are some of the key things to consider.

- Detailed specification / schedule of works – it is important that you have a very clear outline of the work required for the project as you want to make sure that you are getting tender prices that refer to exactly the same work.
- Contingency - you need to make sure that you have an adequate contingency in the tender price as projects rarely go ahead without some additional work being required as part to the project. The size of the contingency will depend on the nature of the work and your architect will be able to advise you on the amount that is appropriate.
- References – it is important to check that the contractor has actually done similar work before and therefore it is important to follow up any references that are provided to check that they are genuine.
- Availability – when can the contractor actually do the work? You may not want to wait for months for the work to start just to save a few pounds.

It is important that the PCC are happy with the proposed contractor as the contract will be between the PCC and the contractor.

Agreeing a start date

Once you have appointed a contractor the next stage is to agree a start date, although this could have been part of the appointment process. The start date may be dependent on the availability of the contractor but other factors may influence when the work starts. If the work will involve the need to worship elsewhere you will need to seek advice from the Archdeacon who may ask you to make a request to the Bishop. You may also need the building ready for a particular date such as Christmas, Easter or perhaps a wedding which may dictate when the work must start and finish. It is always a strong possibility that work will take longer than planned so it is important that you allow for this and do not start a “12 week” project 12 weeks before Christmas for example.

Finalising grant funding

Some grant providers may not confirm the grant until you are able to give a start date for the work and some may only pay out the grant once certain stages of the work are completed. It is important to understand any specific requirements for grant payments before you start the work as this can have a significant impact on cashflow if payments need to be made before grants are received.

Signing the Contract

The contract is a legal agreement between the PCC and the contractor and it is important that the PCC are fully aware of what they are committing to. For most larger projects the contract will be arranged through the architect who is managing the contract. The contract should include details of the payment schedule, any contingencies included in the contract, details of the retention amount and the period of retention. If you

are managing the contract yourself, you should seek legal advice to ensure that you understand the wording of the contract and your commitments under it.

Managing the construction

In most larger projects this is likely to be done to a large extent by the project architect. Despite the architect being the main contact for the contractor throughout the project, it is useful to have a member of the project team who will be the link person and is able to respond to questions that arise during the work. It is very unlikely that a project will go ahead without the need for some decisions along the way, as things are often uncovered when the work begins. The project team and PCC need to agree what decisions the link person can make and who they need to contact to make decisions above their remit.

Completing the work

It is important that you are clear what work needs to be completed at various stages in the project. This is especially important if the project requires different parts of the building to be out of use at different times. If you are using an architect then they should confirm this with the contractor and manage this on your behalf.

Payment

It is important that the work is checked at regular points during the work and in most cases your architect will issue interim and final payment certificates. It is important that invoices are paid promptly and within the payment terms that were agreed. Contractors will have had to pay out for materials, staff costs, etc. and even the larger contractors may not have the reserves to cover these for a longer than they have planned.

If you are not using an architect to manage the contract you will need to meet with the contractor at the relevant point in the project to confirm that you are happy with where the work is up to and agree the amount that is payable at that point.

Snagging

The purpose for retaining part of the total payment for a period of time after the completion of the work is to make sure that you are happy with all aspects of the work that has been completed. At an agreed time after the completion of the project a meeting should be held on site with the contractor and usually the architect to look at any parts of the work that you are not happy with or perhaps parts of the work that have not been completed. The contractor will then have time to complete the outstanding work before the end of retention period.

Reviewing the project

This is part of a project that is often missed as everyone is usually pleased to have completed the work that they forget to review how the project has gone. Whilst you will not undertake major projects every year it is likely that you will undertake some form of building project on a regular basis and it is important to review the project so that you can learn from the experience. Hopefully lots of things will have gone well, but it is likely that some parts of the project will have caused you problems. Perhaps you have spent more than you planned or it took longer than you expected. It is important that you understand the causes of any problems so that you can make sure that you plan around those issues on the next project.

In summary

The information in these documents is not intended to be a full guide on running a building project as plenty of books have been written on this topic over the years. It has hopefully however identified some of the key points that need to be considered when undertaking a building project on your church building.

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