

TOWN CENTRE STEERING GROUP

Suite A The Courtyard – offices of Marlborough Law Ltd.

Minutes of the meeting of 24th October 2024

Present: James Cole (JC, Chair), Charlie Barr (CB), Alistair Fyfe (AF), Adrian Gilmour (AG), Julie Lloyd (JL), Hugh Pihlens (HP), Karen Salmon (KS), Helen Simpson (HS), Simon Lee-Smith (SLS)

On Teams: -

Apologies: Ed Mills, Jehona Hansell (JH)

In attendance: Stella Coulthurst (SC)

		ACTION POINT
1.	<p>Meeting opened at 6.15pm and JC welcomed everyone.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Ed Mills.</p>	
2.	<p>Approval of September Minutes and Previous Meeting Actions:</p> <p>Previous actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Prominent vacant buildings – situation <p>JH submitted an update for the meeting. There has been some action in Government to tackling high street vacant shop units, initially through the “levelling up” initiative and currently with secondary legislation, in final stages of the Parliamentary process, to make rental auctions enforceable by law (details awaited).</p> <p>This has been passed to HTC to submit a list of potential candidates in Hungerford, including #5 High Street and #16 (where there are also listed building concerns and possible use as a HMO) and possibly quite a few others, to be submitted to WBC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ WBC current thinking on licensing – reverted to Jon Winstanley for follow-up ❖ Proposals for Newbury town centre – reverted to Jon Winstanley for follow-up ❖ CRT re signage – response to WBC and SC awaited ❖ CRT re organisation chart – awaited ❖ Views and feedback from retailers – see item 5 below <p>Approval of Minutes:</p> <p>Proposed: HS</p> <p>Seconded: KS</p> <p>Resolution: Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 9th September 2024 were approved as a true record with 1 abstention.</p>	
3.	<p>Voting procedure</p> <p>The meeting discussed the merits of introducing recorded votes, with notification prior to a recorded vote taking place. The meeting as a whole was inclined in favour of this option.</p> <p>Originally raised in connection with the decision, in September, to afford the Chair with a casting vote, JL and SLS wished to record their dissent (two of three votes against).</p>	

4.	<p>Future minutes</p> <p>The meeting discussed ways to improve the circulation of draft minutes to achieve a speedier publication.</p> <p>Proposed: AG</p> <p>Seconded: JC</p> <p>Resolution: A resolution for draft minutes to be agreed only with WBC and the Chair ahead of circulation, with any changes raised thereafter (to avoid taking up too much time in meetings) and agreed at the next meeting was not supported by a majority.</p> <p>Proposed: AG</p> <p>Seconded: JC</p> <p>Resolution: A further resolution for draft minutes to be circulated to all committee members, who should return any comments to the minute-taker within one week and such amendments as agreed in collaboration with the Chair, be published and any further amendments agreed at the next meeting was passed by a majority.</p>	
5.	<p>Re-examination of way to advance the Town Square concept</p> <p>The meeting’s attention was drawn to the WBC comments in response to the AF proposals they had reviewed for the Town Square. JC noted that HTC Cllr Richard Hudson, who is a highways specialist, did not totally align with WBC’s views.</p> <p>AG introduced the feedback to his informal survey (recognised as anecdotal, providing a good flavour of opinion, rather than a scientific report) from a wide group of Retailers. JL expressed some concern that AG was being given the opportunity but he noted that he had been talking to his “constituency”, just as much as T&M and others talked to theirs. He saw scope to fuse ideas, perhaps with a step-by-step approach to testing proving and, in due course, expanding a town square.</p> <p>Retailers’ concerns that there should be no loss of parking stood out but also their general attitude, subject to parking, in favour of there being a town square. It was noted that permit holders also had concerns about parking; while these might be alleviated by access to Church Street, that did not per se resolve the issue. It was a matter for HTC to resolve and TCSG would request that HTC take over this matter.</p> <p>In a wide-ranging discussion about how best to proceed (marred by an altercation between some members, the outcome of which has yet to be fully resolved), which aired the possibility of (a) proceeding to full conclusion (with surveys and analysis of parking and other impacts) the option originally voted on a favoured by the committee, (b) promoting the smaller scheme as an interim measure, and (c) even setting aside the town square option (because of the anxiety caused to some parties, while the way ahead for funding was opaque), two options were voted on formally, as follows:</p> <p>Proposed: CB</p> <p>Seconded: AG</p> <p>Resolution: A resolution to stop further work on the town square concept was voted against by a majority.</p>	

	<p>Proposed: HS</p> <p>Seconded: AF</p> <p>Resolution: A further resolution to progress to the design stage of the originally favoured proposal was passed by a majority.</p>	
6.	<p>Surveys – discussion of possible sources of money</p> <p>The meeting considered various potential sources of funding for the survey work.</p> <p>On behalf of HTC, HS said that she would take this into HTC’s upcoming budget round, although there could be no guarantee of funding.</p> <p>The meeting asked that we press WBC to fund – itself or via its diverse sources of third party funding – the initial survey phase of producing drawings of the scheme. JL stated that she would be willing to take the matter back to T&M trustees in the event of a refusal by WBC to be considered as part of their January budgeting process but said that it was not T&M’s remit; JL and SLS said that the statement of charitable purpose set out on the Charities Commission website (where item 3 states that it is to “Provide financial support to local causes and projects, within the area of benefit”) did not, on its face, fully convey a layer of complexity about T&M’s purpose.</p> <p>It was noted that TCSG has no funds, which limited its options to bid for available funds because many required matched funding.</p>	
7.	<p>Canal update</p> <p>HS updated the meeting on her attendance at the Sustrans presentation, which outlined the roll-out of a 6-phase project, moving west from east of Newbury. The local phase (6) is, in the absence of funding, no more than a feasibility study. The meeting agreed that Sustrans were very much the right organisation (with the right contacts, expertise and money) to lead the project.</p> <p>JH, who had ensured that the local project to added into the Sustrans projects initially identified in and around the area, also submitted an update along the same lines.</p>	
8.	<p>Members of committee and alternates</p> <p>The meeting considered the draft schedule previously circulated.</p> <p>Proposed: HS</p> <p>Seconded: HP</p> <p>Resolution: The meeting voted unanimously in favour of a resolution to adopt the schedule of members and alternates previously circulated in draft.</p>	
9.	<p>Clarifying the extent of T&Ms market rights</p> <p>JL questioned the reason for this discussion, stating that in her view it was not TCSG’s remit or right to ask. JC responded that the reason was, if there were substantive rights and the Town Square proceeded, TCSG needed to understand how it was going to operate. The meeting agreed that there was not sufficient time for this discussion and this agenda item should be carried forward to a future meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>AOB – none</p>	
11.	<p>Meeting ended 8.10pm</p> <p>The date of the next meeting is to be decided.</p>	