

TOWN CENTRE STEERING GROUP

14th March 2024

Suite A The Courtyard – offices of Marlborough Law Ltd.

Present: James Cole (Chair), Sam Robins, Helen Simpson, Alistair Fyfe, Julie Lloyd, Susan Hofgartner, Adrian Gilmour, Hugh Pihlens, Anna Doherty, Karen Salmon, Simon Hobden, Jehona Hansell, Charlie Barr.

1	<p>Apologies were received from Simon Lee Smith</p> <p>Minutes - Nancy Hancock – PA to Karen Salmon – had agreed to do the minutes for the meeting, but it was agreed that the minute-taking needed a plan for the future.</p> <p>James noted that Susan is a Substitute and as Adrian was present Susan would not be able to speak unless presented with a question.</p>	
2	<p>Actions arising from the minutes of meeting 1st February 2024</p> <p>a. Anna confirmed the area outside the Town Hall is Adopted Highway. Further research will be required and next steps to be considered.</p> <p>Julie noted that vehicles would need access on Market days. It was requested that a Highways representative attend a future meeting.</p> <p>b. Alistair showed photos of a retailer with bins in front of the store, and the 2011 Google map of the building showing that there were no bins out front. A possible alternative location was advised – As chair of HTC planning, Alistair volunteered to take any further action.</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by Julie Lloyd, seconded by Helen Simpson and agreed by all.</p>	Alistair
3	<p>The Canal Project</p> <p>Alistair showed us photos of his walk along the canal towpath. It is very boggy in places and needs reinforcements done in certain sections.</p> <p>Hugh’s view was that the path should be used for pedestrians.</p> <p>James: a project to restore the canal towpath through West Berkshire, including Kintbury to Hungerford is under development - a separate initiative/partnership between WBC Environment and external partners. Jehona informed that she has been feeding this initiative in terms of how it aligns with the Canal Improvements project identified in Hungerford Town Centre Strategy. This separate initiative/project focuses in adding cycling to that path/improving accessibility- would be very challenging due to its width/current condition/would need to align with the vision of Hungerford Town Centre Strategy, would need a Feasibility Study.</p>	

	<p>Alistair suggested that we need to be at these meetings. Jehona will take this as a top priority to speak to relevant officers @ WBC and let us know what can be done.</p> <p>On the subject of tourism and the Canal Improvement project, Jehona mentioned that we will need to establish land ownership around the Wharf and the canal towpath in Hungerford; there are many factors to consider. With the Newbury Wharf project, there were several designs brought to the committee and then they added their ideas to finalise the Feasibility Study.</p> <p>Everyone agreed they would like Jehona to take a wharf upgrade back to Rob Coles for his opinion.</p> <p>Julie: improving the quality of the wharf and the towpath have to be a priority. We should try to get the CRT here to clarify their maintenance program.</p> <p>Hugh: the CRT budget is about 30% of what it was.</p> <p>Sustrans standards have so many different parameters. As a cyclist, Karen offered to go to a CRT meeting with Chris Bolton to see what they say.</p>	<p>Jehona</p> <p>Jehona</p> <p>Karen</p>
4	<p>High Street Representative</p> <p>As a follow-up to the discussion at the previous meeting, James proposed that the Group did need a High Street Representative, and that Ed Mills would be a good option as he is new to Hungerford, lives on the High Street and would come without fixed views.</p> <p>Julie had reservations over having a commoner as a High Street Representative on the basis that it may seem that the Town and Manor were over-represented, but would accept James's recommendation. Adrian questioned whether we should add more members.</p> <p>James pointed out that this is a WBC-sponsored group, and WBC had recommended that we should limit numbers.</p> <p>Julie commented that at the last meeting we were all tasked to come up with names and bring them to James. No one did and James chose Ed Mills.</p> <p>Adrian seconded James' proposal and Ed was voted in as High Street Representative.</p>	
5	<p>Questions from the HTC full council meeting on Monday 12th March 2024</p> <p>Helen advised that at the last Hungerford Town Council meeting, a councillor said he was speaking for town residents and she was asked to bring some questions to the group. The questions and answers were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Is the steering group fully representative? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes, now that we have added an extra member. B. High Street Residents are concerned about parking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. It was noted that WBC permits are expensive. 	

	<p>b. There would be a public consultation about any scheme coming out of this Steering Group</p> <p>C. Commoners should be allowed on committee.</p> <p>a. Covered above in point 4.</p> <p>D. There were threats of a letter going to press from High Street Residents.</p> <p>a. Noted</p> <p>E. Several members of the council live on the outskirts of Hungerford.</p> <p>a. The current membership was selected from those who attended the public consultation meetings and met West Berkshire Council's criteria.</p> <p>F. Steering Group not open and transparent.</p> <p>a. Minutes are published.</p> <p>Helen noted that such questions should be handed to the Steering Group for discussion; it was felt that we need to make more effort to communicate progress.</p>	
6	<p>Susan's views</p> <p>At this point Susan was asked to give her views. She accepted that there were some good ideas coming from the Steering Group, but amongst other things she believed all the options – in regards to the piazza - should have been seen by all interested people before the meeting, and important decisions were being made that would affect people not represented.</p> <p>Adrian stated that perhaps he could have come up with an alternative idea.</p> <p>Alistair stated that at the meeting in December we were all given the remit to go away and think about the issue and he was the only member to come back with any kind of plan.</p> <p>Jehona agreed that Alistair stayed within the parameters of our directives and projects.</p> <p>James pointed out that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group does not make decisions as such • It recommends to WBC as it has no budget of its own. • It is doing what it was asked to do in prioritising projects • As far as the proposed piazza was concerned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We were on Step one, to choose from 3 options. ○ Step two is to see if there is any money to do a light drawing so we can look at it and vote for whether or not to take it to WBC. ○ Step three will be to find out whether WBC can raise the money (or where else it could be raised from) <p>It should be noted that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Steering Group views are reported back to respective organisations, including the Town Council, the Town and Manor and the Chamber of Commerce 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the last meeting everyone was given an opportunity to vote for either Option A, Option B, or Option C which were 3 different ideas for a layout of the piazza and we voted for Option B. <p>At the end of this long discussion Julie proposed that Adrian have a go at designing something that he might be happier with (keeping in mind that at after a town meeting there were over 800 respondents to a questionnaire, the top requirement of which was some sort of piazza). She asked him how long he needed and he thought a couple of months.</p> <p>It was agreed that Adrian would present alternative ideas for a piazza to the next Steering Group and would provide us, in advance, his drawings and designs for the piazza.</p> <p>It was also agreed that Alistair would present his for a second time to enable a direct comparison.</p>	Adrian Alistair
7	<p>Attendance of Substitutes</p> <p>This was a very lengthy meeting which reversed a decision made at a previous meeting; as a result Alistair proposed, seconded by Helen, that henceforth Substitutes would not be able to attend this group unless their “principal” was unable to attend. This vote was passed.</p>	
8	<p>Press</p> <p>It was agreed that a joint press statement would be helpful.</p>	
9	<p>Meeting ended at 8.30pm. Next Meeting on May 9th 6.15pm in Suite A The Courtyard.</p>	