

## Runcorn Town Team Minutes Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
<b>Town Team</b>	
Cllr Pauline Sinnott	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr John Gerrard	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Norman Plumptre Walsh	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC Physical Environment Portfolio Holder
Wesley Rourke	Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property
Claire Bradbury John Lunt	Power in Partnership
Kristene Karaski	Cosmopolitan Housing Group (Chester District Housing Association)
Reg Eastup	T H Brown Trust
Si Swanick	Resident
Andy Price	Resident
Gary Shaw	Trader
Maria Tarn	Hazlehurst Craft Studios
Ann Turner Culverhouse	Resident
Brian Lunt	Trader
Rev Vicki Schofield	St Michael & All Angels
Gary Buckles	PCSO
<b>Halton Borough Council Officers</b>	
Jennifer Carr	Regeneration Officer

### Apologies

<b>Town Team</b>	
Alison Gleave	Halton Voluntary Action / resident
Graham Wallace	Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
<b>Halton Borough Council Officers</b>	
Sara Munikwa	Regeneration Manager
Gill Watson	Community Development Officer

## 1. Introductions

Wesley Rourke (WR) welcomed everyone to the inaugural Runcorn Town Team meeting.

## 2. Appointment of Chair

WR asked for nominations of Chair. Reg Eastup (RE) nominated Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh (NPW). This was supported by the Team.

## 3. Development of Terms Of Reference

NPW reviewed the contents of each section with the team

Agreed content subject to following amendments

- Addition of a bullet point to the Terms of Reference detailing the Team's role in overseeing allocation of High Street Innovation Fund

**Action:** HBC to arrange for amendment before issuing Terms of Reference

## 4. What is the 'High Street Innovation Fund' and its criteria for funding?

NPW explained the HSIF is part of a government package to revive rundown high streets in response to the Mary Portas Review. Halton is one of 100 authorities which has been awarded £100k to focus on bringing empty properties back in to use.

Another allocation of funding which will be awarded to the Runcorn Town Team was also raised by NPW. He explained the competition to become a Portas Pilot received an overwhelming response, with over 400 applications from across the country. Subsequently, Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) invited the MPs representing the Town Teams not chosen, to come forward and sign a national pledge to become a Town Team Partner. The Runcorn Town Team has been nominated by Derek Twigg MP and will be awarded £10,000 for registering as a partner. The money is to be used towards achieving the Town Team's vision.

The Team would like to thank Derek Twigg MP for all his hard work, commitment and pressure he has shown to secure money for the Team and drive the overall regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre.

WR explained the money is to be allocated to initiatives that bring empty units back into use and increase footfall in the town centre. It is up to the Team how the money is to be spent working under this remit.

NPW opened it up to the group for ideas of how to spend the money. Suggested ideas were:-

- **Investment in the youth service.** However, this was rejected as other funding sources are available for the youth service, such as Communities First, and it was felt by the Team that the focus should be on matters which

have limited funding sources and would therefore struggle to happen without HSIF

- A **free bus service** to the town centre for a designated period of time.
- **Subsidising business start-ups** as one of the biggest problems facing new businesses are property costs.
- Need for **better directional signage in and around the town centre**. Attract more people and encourage them to use local businesses. Improved signage will help people make sense of the place.
- **Grant to improve shop fronts** to be considered.

It was suggested the Team look at themes which should underpin any bid presented to the Team for funding. Themes suggested were:-

- A service responding to local need
- Innovative
- Match funding
- Visual improvement and improvement to town centre offer (building on a theme of nautical, art, theatre, local produce etc).

As the focus is on the need to fill empty shops, the Town Team prioritise new/existing companies looking to come to the Town Centre first and then businesses already located in the Town Centre. Amounts awarded should be capped and a suggested figure could be calculated using the number of empty shops

**Action:** HBC officers to find out number of vacant units in the Town Centre

WR asked for the group to consider the wider context and offered to make a presentation at the next meeting about Halton Borough Council's (HBC) regeneration activities in the area.

**Action:** WR to make a presentation at the next meeting

**Action:** It was agreed HBC officers are to review all ideas and at the next meeting present indicative costs associated with each one along with details of their feasibility. The Team will then discuss and prioritise the ideas.

## **5. Development of Work Programme – to be determined next meeting**

## **6. Reporting and Communication**

NPW proposed to group that communication is done via HBC. HBC will establish a webpage with an approved email address which members of the public can feed in their comments. These can be discussed at Town Team meetings. Meeting agendas and minutes will be published on the web page along with the Terms of Reference.

**Action:** HBC to set up webpage and dedicated email account.

A summary of the meeting will also be made available in some local shops for those who do not have access to the internet.

**Action:** Summary to be produced and distributed by HBC

Agreed by the Team that all PR should go through HBC's PR team.

**Action:** Any enquiries received by Town Team members should be directed to HBC's press office.

**Action:** HBC to organise a press release for the first meeting.

## **7. Any of Business**

Cllr John Gerrard requested the details of communication and reporting now agreed by the Team should be added to the Terms of Reference

**Action:** HBC to add this additional detail to the Terms of Reference before issuing.

## **8. Next Meeting**

Next meeting will take place on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November at 6pm** at the Boat House, Mersey Road.