

**Runcorn Town Team Minutes  
Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013  
6pm Boat House, Mersey Road**

**Attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>Town Team</b>	
Cllr Norman Plumptre Walsh	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC Physical Environment Portfolio Holder
Claire Bradbury	Power in Partnership
Si Swanick	Resident
Graham Wallace	Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
Maria Tarn	Hazlehurst Craft Studios
Rev Vicki Schofield	St Michael & All Angels
Brian Lunt	Trader
<b>Halton Borough Council Officers</b>	
Jennifer Carr	Regeneration Officer
Sara Munikwa	Regeneration Manager

**Apologies**

<b>Town Team</b>	
Reg Eastup	T H Brown Trust
Wesley Rourke	Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property
Andy Price	Resident
Gary Buckles	PCSO
Ann Turner Culverhouse	Resident
Cllr Pauline Sinnott	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr John Gerrard	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Gary Shaw	Trader
Alison Gleave	Halton Voluntary Action / resident
Kristene Karaski	Cosmopolitan Housing Group (Chester District Housing Association)
<b>Halton Borough Council Officers</b>	
Gill Watson	Community Development Officer

## 1. Introductions

Chair, Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## 2. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

## 3. High Street Innovation Fund

### 3.1 Commercial Property Renewal Grant

The first round was launched before Christmas with the deadline set at 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Five applications and ten expressions of interest were received (two of which applied for funding in this round).

Below is a summary of the applications received:

Property	Proposed Works
62 High Street	To replace dated aluminium frontage, signage, rotten windows, to first/second floors, updated electrical system, eradicate damp
32 Church Street	Installation of a new shop fascia and graphics to enhance the appearance of the shop
12 Church Street	Replacement windows to replace 2x current damaged windows and update the image to shop. Windows will be exactly the same size with the same openings as the current window
71a High Street	Professional repainting of door on High Street and signage to front and rear
Sefton House	1. Brickwork pointing, roof repairs and external painting which requires scaffolding. 2. Repairs / resurfacing to forecourt car park

Discussion regarding the applications followed:

*Best Estate Agents (62 High Street):* It was agreed a decision be deferred to the next meeting subject to further quotes being received to support the application (only one set was submitted).

**Action:** Best Estate Agents to be notified of this request

*Wine Cellar (32 Church Street):* Application has been made by a national company, therefore, allocation of grant is only 25% of eligible expenditure. Grant Offer: £472.50

*James Alexander (12 Church Street):* Asked is a retrospective application could be made and were told no. Subsequently submitted for outstanding work to the windows on the first floor of the property. A lot of investment has been made in the property and the Town Team were happy to support further improvement. Grant Offer: £625

*Hazlehurst Craft Studios (71a High Street):* Maria Tarn declared an interest and left the room. Proposals for new signage and painting of the door were welcomed and supported by the Team. Grant Offer: £260

*Sefton House(Public Hall Street):* As they are not classed as a national company and the proposed improvements will improved the appearance of the property a decision to award grant was made subject to start and end dates being provided to show works will commence within 3 months. Grant Offer: £4,201

**Action:** JC to notify all application of Town Team’s decisions as above.

Within the expression of interest 3 queries were received to be considered by the Town Team:

1. Can retrospective applications be considered – this query was raised more than once.

Cllr NP highlighted that saying ‘yes’ would lead to many more retrospective applications. JC explained that as the HSIF is government money, therefore, the Council are required to demonstrate value for money which is why 3 quotes are requested to support any application. This cannot be done for retrospective works. SM confirmed the audit trail would also be difficult to follow.

Due to the need to prove value for money and to maximise what the limited HSIF budget can support, a decision was made for retrospective applications to not be eligible for grant under the current scheme. However, properties which have recently undertaken works are invited to submit application(s) for further works to their frontages not already undertaken.

**Action:** JC to feedback

2. Can applications relating to internal improvements relating to fire safety be considered?

It was agreed the grant is for external improvements only.

**Action:** JC to feedback

3. Will applications from just outside of the Town Team’s Focus Area be considered?

It was felt that by inviting one company to apply, you would be inviting further applicants and focus would be lost from the core Town Centre area. Therefore, only applications from businesses located within the Focus Area boundary will be considered.

Cllr NP asked if the Team would considered it appropriate to launch a second round of the grant.

Due to the positive feedback received it was decided to launch a second round and for the deadline to be one week before the next Town Team meeting i.e. Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March

**Action:** JC to feedback and arrange for second round to be launched

### 3.2 Environmental Improvements

*Grot Spots:* JC explained that all identified areas of overgrown vegetation as shared at the previous Town Team meeting have been cut back and will be treated to prevent regrowth.

*Graffiti removal:* JC has met with Youth Graffiti Solutions who have offered a one year Service Level Agreement for £1,000 which will allow ad hoc graffiti removal in the focus area. Removal of graffiti will depend on the nature of the material on which the graffiti has been painted and permission of the property owner. The Team approved for the SLA to be actioned. Once live, reports of graffiti should be made to the Town Team email address ([Runcorn.townteam@halton.gov.uk](mailto:Runcorn.townteam@halton.gov.uk)) or contact number 0303 333 4300 so instructions can be given via the Town Team SLA.

**Action:** JC to arrange with Youth Graffiti Solutions.

*Signage:* JC fed back that an alternative funding source may have been found to fund additional signage in the Town Centre.

**Action:** HBC Officers to investigate further

However, on a walk round, it was discovered that a sign post directing pedestrians to the town centre from Picow Farm Road (by the Railway public house) was out of view from the stairs leading down from the station. For £80 this post could be moved to be in view at the base of the stairs. This was approved by the Town Team

**Action:** HBC Officers to arrange.

### 3.3 Business Start-Up Grant

At the previous meeting it was agreed that this proposal be looked into in further detail. JC explained that since then terms and conditions and an application form have been drafted along with discussions with Council colleagues regarding criteria for eligibility, amount of grant available and restrictions on how it should be spent.

It will be for grants up to £2,500 for costs associated with the fit out of a property for the business start-up. They must be locating within the Town Team Focus Area.

Criteria is:-

- Attendance on a reputable business support programme such as Kick Start or relevant higher education qualification.
- Viable business plan, subject to evaluation by a person nominated by the Runcorn Town Team.
- Proof of lease or purchase of business premises located within the Town Team Focus area.
- Evidence the applicant has registered with HMRC as being self-employed.

SS raised the New Enterprise Allowance to the group. The NEA is received as a top up for a period of time while a person is establishing their business. SS suggests Clive Wallace come in to talk to the Team about this and how it could potentially compliment the start-up grant.

**Action:** SS to invite Clive Wallace to the next Town Team meeting.

Team approved for Business Start-Up grant scheme to be launched once documentation is finalised.

**Action:** JC to arrange for documentation to be approved by HBC Legal and the grant launched.

BL asked if there was a possibility of business rate relief for business start-ups. SM confirmed that business rates are nationally set.

### **3.4 Website**

It was suggested at the last meeting the Town Team look to establish a website for itself and Runcorn Town Centre. JC explained there is a graduate intern scheme run by Halton People Into Jobs (HPIJ) which provides Halton graduates with volunteer work placements of up to 13 weeks.

This would be an excellent opportunity to engage a local graduate in the creation of a website. The graduate would be asked to work on the Town Team/Runcorn Town Centre webpage as well as others in need of attention in the Regeneration Team at the Council.

The Town Team approved this approach.

**Action:** JC to progress

## **4. A.O.B.**

### **4.1 Runcorn Market**

Cllr Sinnott has asked for Runcorn market to be discussed at the meeting. It was agreed that it would be added as an agenda item. Before this, traders are to be asked for suggestions of how they would like to see links established with the Town Team.

**Action:** HBC Officers to consult traders

### **4.2 Library update**

SM provided an update on the former library. The guardians are still in residence. Discussions have taken place with community groups who had registered their interest. They have written to the Council and the Council has requested further information from the groups. SM also confirmed the library is within the Town Team Focus Area.

CB asked that the whole community are kept aware of what is going on as there may be others who have not registered who would be interested or have an interest in the building. Need to keep an open mind over who could be involved.

### **4.3 Site visits**

VS raised the discussion point from the last meeting regarding a visit to New Brighton (to see Neptune's work) and Stockton Heath (a place which has seen

successful investment in recent years). The Team are still keen for a visit to Stockton Heath to take place. Possibility of linking the visit with a Town Team meeting later in the year once the days are lighter.

**Action:** JC to investigate the possibility of a visit and feedback at next Town Team meeting.

#### **4.4 Regeneration Update**

SM explained that the Neptune Consortium is continuing to look at the whole of Runcorn Town Centre. Consolidated Property Group, who are solely looking at the Crossville site, are working on overcoming constraints and design.

#### **4.5 Logo**

A selection of Logos designed by HBC's in house design team were shared with the Team. It was decided that although the flow of the 'R' to represent the waterways in the town was liked, there was the potential for some designs to be too similar to other logos already in use. Cllr NP suggested Hazlehurst Craft Studios design alternatives building on this theme. MT was happy with the proposal and agreed to share with colleagues at Hazlehurst.

**Action:** MT to ask if Hazlehurst Craft Studios would like to put forward some logo designs and if yes, liaise with JC so a vote can be coordinated and a decision made if possible before the next Town Team meeting.

#### **4.6 Press/Promotion of Runcorn**

VS asked if it would be possible to do some promotion around the good work which is being done in Runcorn.

Cllr RH confirmed a recent report showed that more public money has been spent in Runcorn than Widnes.

SS believes perception of more investment of public money in Widnes than Runcorn is due to works in Widnes being in prominent places, such as the shopping park and the Hive, but in Runcorn investment has been in areas not as visible, such as Castlefields.

CB felt that the Town Team is a positive story and things are coming forward. People need to know about change.

**Action:** JC to speak to HBC Marketing team and see what can be done.

### **5. Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at 6pm at the Boat House, Mersey Road.