

Runcorn Town Team Minutes
Wednesday 24th July 2013
6pm Old Police Station, Mersey Road

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Town Team	
Cllr John Gerrard	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC Physical Environment Portfolio Holder
Si Swanick	Resident
Gary Shaw	Trader
Graham Wallace	Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
Syd Broxton	T H Brown Trust
Rev Vicki Schofield	St Michael & All Angels
Ann Turner Culverhouse	Resident
Alison Gleave	Halton Voluntary Action / resident
Sandra Hannan	Halton Community Partnership
Tony Collacott	Wat Phra Singh
Phramaha Thirasak	Wat Phra Singh
Halton Borough Council Officers	
Jennifer Carr	Regeneration Officer
Sara Munikwa	Regeneration Manager
Gill Watson	Community Development Officer

Apologies

Town Team	
Reg Eastup	T H Brown Trust
Gary Buckles	PCSO
John Egan	Market Trader
Neil McLoughlin	Market Trader
Brian Lunt	Trader
Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Pauline Sinnott	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Claire Bradbury	Power in Partnership
Maria Tarn	Hazlehurst Craft Studios
Wesley Rourke	Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property

1. Introductions

Chair Cllr John Gerrard (JG), welcomed everyone to the meeting including the two guest speakers, Sandra Hannan representing the Runcorn Christmas Festival and Tony Collacott a trustee of Wat Phra Singh charity.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

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

3. Runcorn Christmas Festival, Sandra Hannan

Sandra Hannan (SH) had requested to present to the Town Team proposals being developed for a Runcorn Christmas Festival.

She explained that what started as the Christmas Fayre is now evolving, people involved wanted to make it bigger and better for the people of Runcorn to enjoy. Already held a few meetings and have become a fully constituted group. The festival will start on Friday 29th November 2013 and last 2 weeks. Hoping to start with children's parade, a light switch on by the children and/or a celebrity. From there all sorts of different plans. None have been finalised yet.

Ideas include – Santa's grotto, use of Churchill Mansions for events, a carol concert and a children's treasure hunt. Next meeting for the organising group is tomorrow (Thursday 25th)

SH explained they have not yet completed a funding profile but would like to come back to the next Town team meeting to discuss the possibility of a funding contribution from the Town Team.

Plans are already underway to publicise the events, including a brochure to fill with event details. This will be distributed from early November. Gill Watson (GW) expanded on more publicity ideas with a narrative for the Brindley brochure already produced. A website is planned, a holding page is currently in place. The Council's Corporate Intelligence unit is helping to set the website up. Potentially there will also be a Facebook page and looking to have coverage in the local press.

SH clarified that the Christmas fayre and the Festival are one and the same.

Graham Wallace (GrW) suggested the group put a question on any flyers asking if people are interested in the events via the website or email. Feedback will provide an indication of how many people to expect.

Cllr Ron Hignett (RH) stated the consensus of the Town Team in welcoming the proposal and asked for further details to be presented with a request for funding at the September meeting.

JG confirmed agreement in principle from the Team to offer funding support to the Christmas festival. If the group would like to request funding sooner than the September meeting, an email can be circulated around Town Team members for approval.

If anyone would like further information or would like to help the Christmas festival Sandra's contact details are

Sandra Hannan email: hcpt@btconnect.com tel: 01928 577404

Action: SH to be invited to September meeting to present further information about the festival and a funding proposal to the Team.

4.0 Wat Phra Singh, Tony Collacott

Following the previous Town Team meeting, Tony Collacott (TC) a trustee of Wat Phra Singh was invited to discuss the charities proposals for the Waterloo.

TC explained two resident monks, Phramaha Thirasak and another, have arrived. Applications have been made to the UK border agency for more to come.

The Waterloo will become a temple and meditation centre. Registered as a charity last year in the UK. The translation is Wat = temple Phra = Buddha Singha = Lion

Began search for premises last year, initially to rent, but as the donations accumulated they were able to look to buy and widen their catchment area from the initial search of Helsby where TC lives. TC works in Widnes so contacted Halton Council. Through Shelah Semoff, Partnership Officer at the Council, he looked at various properties in the borough including Egerton St Library. The Waterloo was mentioned as being for sale and when he saw the building (including the lion on the front) an offer was made. They collected the keys in January 2013.

Minor works have been carried out with some redecoration, the managers apartment has been opened up to become a meditation room. Main lounge bar downstairs is now the main shrine room where supporters can chant and meditate. This room can hold around 150 people comfortably. The pool room is now a meeting room/dining room. Upstairs offices and residence for monks. 4 bedrooms for people to stay on meditation retreat. No staff all volunteers. The charity and the premises function only on contributions.

Support has been fantastic. The charity would like to become part of the Runcorn community. Meditation classes will be set up for free.

Planning a number of events, religious and cultural. An event held to mark Thai new year in June attracted over 250 people. People came from all over the country, Milton Keynes, Sunderland, Norwich..... very wide catchment area.

Start of Buddhist Wesak will bring 300/400 people. This is the 11th Buddhist temple in the UK. Its location is one of the reasons they were attracted to the building with parking, the railway station and road network.

Now engaging with the Liverpool Thai society which has around 250 people members.

VS asked about visits from schools?

TC explained some enquiries have been received but waiting until monks are in residence. Welcome the opportunity to work with local schools and engage with other faith groups.

GS asked how the Town Team could help. One of the Town Team's main aims is to increase footfall and with the number of people that will be attracted to the temple's events the Team would like to offer support if appropriate.

The group discussed the possibility of offering a place on the Town Team to a representative from Wat Phra Singh. Halton Housing Trust has yet to nominate a person for the Town Team or attended any meetings.

Action: JC to speak to HHT. If they are happy for their place on the Town Team to be made open, this should then be offered to Wat Phra Singh.

TC's contact details are:

Tony Collacott
Trustee of Wat Phra Singh UK
88, High Street, Runcorn,
Cheshire, WA7 1JH, UK
Registered Charity No 1148728
T: 01928 575444
T: 0151 420 9515 (Office hours)
M: 0777 601 1975
E: tony@watphrasinghuk.org
W: www.watphrasinghuk.org

5. High Street Innovation Fund

5.1 Discussion of Grant Applications

5.1.1 Commercial Property Renewal Grant

One application was received, see the below table for a summary.

Property	Proposed Works
62-64 Church Street	Renewal of roof over 62/64 Church Street as water is leaking into the 1st floor of both premises.

Discussion regarding the application followed:

Halton Carers and Vacant (62-64 Church Street, owned by Halton Borough Council):
Cllrs JG and Ron Hignett (RH) declared an interest and left the room.

Si Swanick (SS) emphasised that the grant is available to all property owners in the Town Centre therefore the fact it is the Council applying for the funds should not influence any decision. This is a property in a prominent location in need of external repair to retain an existing tenant and attract an occupier for number 64.

ATC expressed concern that if the Team were not to offer help the property would fall further into disrepair and risk losing Halton Carer's as well as 64 remaining empty

GS highlighted that 64 has been vacant for over 5 years now and the Team are trying to attract new business to fill this type of premises.

The Team voted 6 to 1 for the money to be awarded. **Approved grant offer: £10,000**

Action: JC to notify applicant of Town Team's decisions as above.

4.1.2 Business Start-Up Grant

One application was received, see below table for summary.

Property	Business	Proposed Works
81 High Street	The Clothing Co. Ltd	Vacant premises to be converted to clothes shop. Application is for conversion of premises from internet café, decorating, new signage, fixtures and fittings.

A lot happening that end of town new cake shop, flat conversions, hexagon recruitment, on way route linking town to railway station.

JC explained that the applicant is yet to meet any of the grant criteria including an approved business plan and agreed lease/purchase of the property. Only one quote for each of the larger items has been provide when three for each are required.

Team agreed that although the application was welcome the level of detail needs to be improved on and the criteria met. It was felt that the next meeting in two months' time would be a better place to review an application and they should be invited to resubmit an application then. **Decision deferred to September meeting subject to resubmission.**

Action: JC to notify applicant of Town Team's decision.

5.1 Progress Made

5.1.1 Update for live grants

JC updated on grants awarded at the previous meetings

Since the last meeting, grants have been paid to

- Taylor's Hair & Beauty Spa (electrics)
- Sefton House – painting and scaffolding
- Runcorn Anglers – signage

Works completed and expecting invoices soon

- Sweet Memories – the opening of the shop featured in the Weekly News
- Hazlehurst Craft Studios
- 67A Church Street

Outstanding grants which work has not yet begun – Booze Buster

Sweet Memories recently appeared in Runcorn & Widnes Weekly News. As well as promoting the shop, the article also had quite a bit of detail regarding the Town Team and its work.

Environmental Initiatives

Mural bench, High Street. Bench by the Camden buildings has been moved to face the mural

Graffiti removal: Youth Graffiti Solutions has removed a significant amount of graffiti from the subway under the Daresbury Expressway by Leira Way

SS expressed concerns that there may still be graffiti on this subway.

Action: JC to check and if necessary report YGS

All reports of graffiti to be treated as part of the Town Team agreement are to go through Jenny Carr and Sara Munikwa at HBC by emailing the Runcorn Town Team Runcorn.townteam@halton.gov.uk or via the Council's contact centre 0300 333 4300

Mural: Work towards a mural for the Senga building will be picked up again now the market container mural is complete.

5.1.2 Market initiatives

Canvas bags: JC confirmed they have arrived, now a decision needs to be made how to distribute them. Suggest 1000 are given to the market traders with the remaining 1500 bags given out in ways to target people who may not know about the market, such as shops for none market days, the Brindley, Library, events in the borough e.g. Vintage Rally.

Action: JC to share proposals with John Egan and Neil McLaughlin

Container mural: The mural on the container is complete. It has featured on Wire FM and in the Weekly News and the World

Minibus: Vinyls for the bus are being fabricated. For PR we are going to arrange for a photo opp to take place on market day.

Action: JC to arrange photo opportunity and invite press.

Plastic bags: The quotes received from Council suppliers are too expensive so JC is speaking to HBC procurement to try and find a way to gain extra quotes from suppliers not on the Council system.

5.1.4 Business rates

JC explained that based on feedback from Council Officers the advice is for an initiative based on business rates relief not to be taken forward by the Town Team. This is mainly due to complexities associated with administering such a grant and there are also many businesses in Runcorn already receiving business rates relief.

A business qualifies for small business rate relief if they only use one property and its ratable value is less than £12,000. Until 31 March 2014, properties with a ratable value of £6,000 or less receive 100% relief (doubled from the usual rate of 50%). The rate of relief will gradually decrease from 100% to 0% for properties with a ratable value between £6,001 and £12,000. A quick review of Runcorn shows that 124 properties receive no relief and 63 do (31/05/13). The 124 include HBC, landlords and trading businesses.

5.1.5 Website

JC confirmed the website is up and running. The Business Directory is under construction as the format has changed since the last meeting to show a map of the town centre and icons for the location of each business. JC is in the process of setting this up.

5.1.5 HSIF Profile

Following approvals at this meeting, the current profile (24/07/2013) is

Initiative	Allocated (£)	Committed (£)	Remaining (£)
Environmental Improvements	9,300	3,300	6,000
<i>Grot spots</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Mural</i>	<i>6,000</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6,000</i>
<i>Graffiti removal</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Bench relocation</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>0</i>
Signage	1,000	0	1,000
Commercial Property Renewal Grant	50,000	21,533.63	28,466
Business Start Up Grant	25,000	7,714.48	17,286
Market Support	5,000	4,375.00	625
Contingency	9,700	200	9,500
Total	100,000	32,548	67,452

6.0 Date of next meeting

The next meetings will be held at 6pm on Wednesday 25th September. Venue TBC.