

Runcorn Town Team Minutes
Thursday 28th November
6pm Wat Phra Singh UK Temple, High Street

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Town Team	
Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr John Gerrard	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC Physical Environment Portfolio Holder
Wesley Rourke	Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property
Gary Shaw	Trader
Graham Wallace	Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
John Egan	Market Trader
Tony Collacott	Wat Phra Singh UK
Ann Turner Culverhouse	Resident
Brian Lunt	Trader
Alison Gleave	Halton Voluntary Action / resident
Claire Bradbury	Power in Partnership
Syd Broxton	T H Brown Trust
Si Swanick	Resident
Rev Vicki Schofield	St Michael & All Angels
Halton Borough Council Officers	
Jennifer Carr	Regeneration Officer
Sara Munikwa	Regeneration Manager

Apologies

Town Team	
Cllr Pauline Sinnott	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Gary Buckles	PCSO
Neil McLoughlin	Market Trader
Maria Tarn	Hazlehurst Craft Studios

1. Introductions

Chair, Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh (NPW) 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 Discussion of Grant Applications

3.1.1 Business Start-Up Grant

Two applications were received, see below table for summary.

Applicant	Property	Description of works	Grant applied for
Phil Payne/Paul Davies	In discussions to purchase 48-54 Church Street and convert to restaurant/cafe	Rewire all areas, bringing up to regulatory standard; skim all walls and ceilings; apply self leveller to all floors and finish in wood; supply and fit all new skirts and door frames; apply 2 coats of magnolia to all walls and ceilings and undercoat and gloss all woodwork.	£2,500
Michelle Leather	23 High Street (5 yr lease agreed)	Plumbing, electrics, flooring and redecoration	£2,500
Provisional total			£5000

Jenny Carr (JC) provided a summary of the grant scheme. Grants of up to £2,500 are available for business start-ups locating in vacant premises within the Town Team Focus Area. The grant can fund 100% of costs and is for works associated with bringing the property up to standard. The main aims are for improvement works to the property itself such as electrics, plumbing, plastering etc so the money invested remains in the property if the business leaves. No grant is paid until works are satisfactorily completed.

Chameleon (48-54 Church Street): Cllr Ron Hignett (RH) declared an interest and left the room.

Gary Shaw (GS) welcomed the application and declared his support

Si Swanick (SS) agreed. Projected employment figures are positive.

NPW confirmed there is no residential aspect to the conversion and the whole property will be brought back in to use. Hope to open in the new year.

Application approved for the full grant amount £2,500 subject to purchase of property

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

Sheek Boutique (23 High Street): NPW outlined the grant application. The business will see a clothes and shoe shop for Runcorn which it does not have at the moment.

JC explained a business plan has been produced and no grant is paid until works are completed and the grant applicant is satisfied with the works. This grant is for the electrical costs so is an improvement to the property.

Application approved for the full grant amount £2,500 subject to conditions to be identified to the grant applicant.

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

3.1.2 Commercial Property Renewal Grant

Four applications were received, see the below table for a summary.

Applicant	Property	Description of works	Grant applied for
S.Bennett & J Godfrey	Owner of 79 Church Street / 1 Regent Street, Runcorn	Subdivision of retail area into 2 units. Formation of separate access to offices over. Refurbishments of shop fronts, external elevation, internal finishes and services.	£10,000
Phil Payne/Paul Davies	In discussions to purchase 48-54 Church Street and convert to restaurant/cafe	Property requires full renovation. Scaffolding, rainwater goods, roofing, rendering, redecoration, new signs and shutters and windows are all necessary improvements.	£8,650
Michelle Leather	23 High Street (5 yr lease agreed)	New signage and shutters	£1,355
Graham Sefton	Owner of the	Paint outside with	£1,350

	Boathouse, Mersey Road	weathershield, lower and re render chimney and associated scaffolding.	
		Provisional total	£11,355

JC provided a summary the grant scheme. Grants up to £10,000 can be applied for to cover 50% of costs associated with works to improve the appearance of the property. Again, the grant is not paid until after work has been completed to a satisfactory standard.

Discussion regarding the applications received followed:

Synergy Building: NPW explained this building has been vacant and in a poor state of repair for a number of years.

GS agreed and stated his support.

JC explained the applicant has followed a procurement process and submitted costs for the chosen contractor. External works total over £20,000 and overall costs of improvements to the property are above £40,000.

Grant approved for £10,000

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

23 Church Street: The group discussed if there are existing shutters on the property. GS confirmed he had not seen any on the property. He suggested though that money requested for shutters should not be offered. It will give the applicant the opportunity to use their own 50% of the costs towards other areas of the business.

Alison Gleave (AG) stated that the insurance premium for the shop is likely to reduce if shutters are installed.

Syd Broxton (SB) highlighted that if the shop is vandalised without shutters installed then all other good work would be undone.

It was then suggested by Wesley Rourke (WR) that the applicant is offered the opportunity to withdraw the request for a contribution towards shutters to free her own money for other areas of the business. She can then make a decision as to what is best for the business.

NPW proposed Council Officers to be allowed delegated authority to make decision on shutters depending on feedback from applicant. Officers to circulate decision. This was agreed as the way forward.

Grant approved for £1,295 (including shutters) dependent on feedback to suggestion to not fund shutters.

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

Action: JC to circulate decision regarding grant towards shutters.

Boathouse: SB asked who will benefit from this application?

NPW explained that the Town Team are aware of issues experienced by the previous tenant regarding the building layout in relation to fire regulations. There is no proposed end use for the property. The owner, Mr Sefton, has also previously been awarded grant for improvements to Sefton House.

SS believed the property is for sale, therefore, improvements will help the sale not occupation of the property.

Consensus of the team was to not support the application.

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

4.2 Progress Made

4.2.1 Market support

JC confirmed quotes were received for plastic bags but then whilst waiting for the samples from the lowest bidder they withdraw their tender. Samples have been received for the bags. John Egan confirmed he is happy with the sample and JC will now process the order. Lead in time for the bags once ordered is 12-14 weeks, the aim will be for the bags to arrive by Easter.

Sara Munikwa (SM) confirmed that the street market will not take place on Christmas Eve. Only 2 confirmed and one maybe from traders therefore the decision was made for it not to go ahead. A mixed reaction is likely but the Council believe the decision is the correct one as Church Street will remain open. The market does not operate between Christmas and New Year (it closes for 2 weeks)

JE explained most traders opted for Widnes on Christmas Eve as they believe the trade there will be better.

Graham Wallace (GW) asked about ways to promote the market to make more people aware it takes place.

JE believes the plastic bags will help. Suggested leaflets would be a good idea too.

AG suggested a piece in Inside Halton to promote the good work that is happening in Runcorn Old Town including the market, new shops etc.

Action: JC to investigate possibility of an article for Inside Halton

4.2.2 Update for live grants

Tony Collacott (TC) explained that Wat Phra Singh hope to have completed their external works by the end of November. Signage is all in place but issues have been experienced with regards to having the windows fitted. He also confirmed the contingency allocation awarded for potential works to the roof will not be needed.

JC explained she is awaiting an update from Wild Rowes (re: pet shop on Church Street awarded grant at the September meeting).

4.2.3 Christmas Festival

JC confirmed the Christmas Festival starts 29th November with the light switch on by a celebrity from the Brindley Panto. Roads will be closed from 4.30pm.

Feedback has been very positive about the Christmas tree which the Town Team funded. Arrangements are being made for the Town Team payment of the roads closures.

4.2.4 Arts Programme

JC summarised that the proposed programme is still CO3 Dance at Easter, Hazlehurst plant pots over the summer and Suitcase Ensemble drama production in Autumn. Still hopeful all will securing match funding.

Maintenance of the plant pots over the summer was questioned.

Action: JC to speak to Hazlehurst to see what proposals are.

AG asked about ashtrays on street – can they be removed?

Action: HBC to review.

4.2.5 Graffiti Removal

JC explained Youth Graffiti Solutions (YGS) have offered to renew the contract for graffiti removal in the Town Team Focus Area for another year at the same price, £1,000. This was approved.

Action: JC to notify YGS

4.2.6 Tackling empty shop fronts

JC confirmed Jeremy Rucker from City Dressing has visited Runcorn Old Town. He has suggested a museum/gallery theme relating back to the history of the Town and working with local schools on the design. As the Team have allocated £3,000 the proposal is to put fake fronts on the Senga furniture building, Washington upholstery and Springers on High Street. There is potential for it to then be a circulator walking route of Church Street/Regent Street and High Street.

Initiative and buildings approved.

Action: JC to contact City Dressing with decision

4.4 HSIF Profile

Following approvals at this meeting, the current profile (28/11/2013) is

Initiative	Allocated (£)	Committed (£)	Remaining (£)
Environmental Improvements	10,300	9,300	1000
<i>Grot spots</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Public art</i>	<i>6,000</i>	<i>6,000</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Graffiti removal</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</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	36,561	13,439
Business Start Up Grant	25,000	13,478	11,522
Market Support	5,000	4,375	625
Fake shop fronts	3,000	0	3,000
Christmas Festival	3,300	2,738	562
Contingency	2,400	200	2,200
Total	100,000	66,652	33,348

5.0 AOB

5.1 Women's Institute

NPW gave a presentation to the WI regarding Runcorn Old Town regeneration including the Town Team's work. There is potential to work with them in the future for initiatives to promote the High Street

5.2 Finger posts

Cllr John Gerrard (JG) asked about progress on finger posts to the temple.

JC explained need to work with TC to work up a scheme and then to present this to the Council's Highways Team for comment. They have been reluctant to support new signage in the Town due to maintenance costs.

Action: JC to work with TC and speak to HBC Highways

5.3 Post Office

SB asked for an update on the Post Office.

GS has heard there are 3 people interested and it will stay in the Old Town.

SS it will be up to the Post Office to promote any changes.

5.4 Next meeting

NPW suggested the next meeting be a review to look at what the Town Team has achieved to date and what it would like to focus on with the remaining HSIF allocation.

JC asked for room suggestions for the meeting.

**Action: JC to look at the following options as a location of the next meeting
All Saints Church, the Brindley, local pubs, and boat club.**

GS believes over the last 4/5 months a dramatic change has been experienced in the town and appreciates the efforts of the Town Team in helping this happen.

The next meeting will be held at **6pm on Tuesday 28th January 2014 venue tbc**