

Runcorn Town Team Minutes
Tuesday, 25 March 2015
6pm Sabor, Church Street, Runcorn

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Town Team	
Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC Physical Environment Portfolio Holder
Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr John Gerrard	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Pauline Sinnott	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Graham Wallace	Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
Wesley Rourke	Operational Director Economy Enterprise and Property
Tony Collacott	Wat Phra Singh UK
Alison Gleave	Halton Voluntary Action/ Resident
Maria Tarn	Hazlehurst Craft Studio
Gary Buckles	PCSO
Claire Bradbury	Power in Partnership
Ann Turner Culverhouse	Resident
Gemma Brannan	Trader
Syd Broxton	T H Brown Trust
Rev Vicky Schofield	St Michael & All Angels
Guest Speakers	
Sandra Hannan	Runcorn Festival Group
Caz Moss	Runcorn Festival Group
Halton Borough Council Officers	
Lindsey Smith	Regeneration Officer
Danielle Lightfoot	Graduate Regeneration Officer

Apologies

Town Team	
Sara Munikwa	Regeneration Manager
Neil McLoughlin	Market Trader
John Egan	Market Trader
Gary Shaw	Trader

1.0 Introductions

Chair, Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh (NPW), welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone present introduced themselves.

2.0 Minutes from previous meeting

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

3.0 Guest Speakers – Caz Moss & Sandra Hannan, Runcorn Festival Group

Sandra Hannan (SH) brought a letter to the meeting to respond to the issues raised at the last Town Team meeting. SH noted that the Runcorn Festival Group is a voluntary committee and that last Christmas was their second year of running the Christmas Festival and Market. She noted that they had tried to contact/ involve local traders and had been to the shops twice delivering flyers about the events. If any local businesses/ other volunteers wish to get involved they can and should contact them.

SH explained that Runcorn Shopping Centre had paid for the DJ and bands as their contribution to the event. The only input that the Runcorn Festival Group had into this related to timings.

Local traders did have stalls on the Christmas Market.

They had taken advice from security companies about using barriers to mark the route, but they had been advised not to go down this route. Barriers can create their own problems. They will seek advice on this again this year.

Overall the event had been really successful and although there were probably fewer people attending, this was likely to be due to the terrible weather on the day.

The event had cost the local town nothing. Financial support had been sought from the lottery, Area Forum, Runcorn Shopping Centre. Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh (NPW) also noted that the Town Team had supported the event through arranging and purchasing the tree and the street cleaning exercise.

Caz Moss (CM) noted that next year they were hoping to include more of the town centre and therefore businesses and wanted to extend the parade route to include Church Street, High Street and Regent Street. She noted that they would need some advice from Halton BC about whether this would be possible.

They are hoping to hold the parade and Christmas market on the same day this year so would need a site to host the market element. CM asked if it would be possible to use the temporary car park outside Iceland. They need a steer on both these elements as soon as possible as this will have implications for the overall plan.

Cllr Pauline Sinnott (PS) noted that the use of the car park would have implications for car parking provision in the town centre at the time of the event. Wesley Rourke (WR) noted that they would speak with colleagues in highways and get back to them.

WR noted that the potential for marketing the Christmas Festival outside of the Borough which would mean that more businesses could profit from the event.

PS noted that not many businesses in the town centre had decorated their shop fronts for the event and there was some discussion about whether it would be possible to hold a competition for the best dressed shop. CM noted that they were looking at holding an 'Elf on a Shelf' event where they would hide an elf in different shops to involve local businesses.

SH asked if they could have a Christmas tree again whilst leaving so no response provided during meeting.

Actions: HBC to advise Runcorn Festival Group on use of car park for market and proposed road closures for parade.

4.0 Updates and Feedback

4.1 Runcorn BID

WR provided an update on the Runcorn Retail BID.

BID is about business/ traders/ retailers coming together. The principle is that all eligible businesses make a small financial contribution which forms a bigger pot which can be spent on initiatives with the BID area to benefit all.

BID area includes Runcorn town centre, Runcorn Shopping Centre and Trident Retail Park.

Runcorn Shopping Centre and Runcorn town centre have a different offer. RSC has larger retail outlets, but the town centre has amore unique selling proposition having more of a bespoke, community, leisure and cultural offer.

BID being led by Groundwork who has received a grant from Government to carry out the consultation exercise around how the town centre can become more viable.

At the launch meeting, 34 businesses attended. Since then there has been a consultation exercise which has included face to face visits, workshops, press and social media coverage. Businesses consulted on a range of issues. This exercise closed on 16 March 2015. 99 responses received (32%). WR noted that on average they are looking to achieve a response rate of between 25-40%.

Groundwork is now pulling this information together and they hope to have achieved this by the end of this week/ beginning of next. The next step is to then prepare a Business Plan for the BID area which sets out key priorities and themes. Later on in the summer businesses will be invited to vote on this.

WR noted that BIDs were a great opportunity and there is evidence to show that they do work. In Halton there are two successful BIDs at Astmoor and Halebank.

BIDs can only fund initiatives that go above or beyond what the Council already provides to add value.

The High Street innovation fund is now limited. Need something to keep up the work that is currently being done by the Town Team.

A Board will be established if the BID is successful and there needs to be representation from the Old Town.

Syd Broxton (SB) noted that there have been lots of surveys around finding out what people really want and lots of promises made. WR noted that if the BID is successful there would be resources in place to act on the business plan. It will be all about increasing visitors and promoting vitality. The BID does not make false promises.

There was some discussion about how it may be beneficial to have more retailers on the Town Team. WR noted that those on the Town Team should help share the positive message about the opportunities the BID brings.

If the BID is adopted need to see if the Town Team can be part of it and have Board representation. Perhaps also some wider strategic involvement. Gemma Brannan (GB) agreed that the Old Town does need a voice.

WR noted the work that has been done in the Town Centres and how Cllr Ron Hignett the Portfolio Holder had asked him to prepare a report to the Executive Board about what has been achieved. NPW noted the paper that was going to the Economy and Urban Renewal PPB on 29th March about town centre policies.

4.2 Grant Schemes

NPW provided an update on the outstanding grants from the last Town Team Meeting. Progress made as shown below:

Business Support Grants:

An application has been received for a new hardware store on Regent Street. However, the application is incomplete and will need inspecting to ensure that works have not yet started. Agreed that to avoid delay this application could be decided outside of the town team meetings by email vote once all the outstanding information has been received.

Actions: HBC officers to share complete details by email for a vote.

Commercial Property Renewal Grants:

Mersey Bridge View: Now in contact with applicant who has recently clarified that they are not going to progress the banner. This leaves £850 to be added to the Halton Carers grant. They are still hoping to render and paint the building (grant =

£1,650.00 but they need the weather to change before this can progress/ commit to timescale).

Halton Carers: Considerable effort was made by Halton BC to secure the correct contractors to undertake the structural works to the building. Unfortunately just before the contractors were due to start on site, they went into liquidation and are no longer able to undertake the project. As Halton Carers went through a tender process for the works, Halton is in the process of trying to agree terms with the second lowest bidder in an attempt to reinstate the project as soon as possible. Halton Carers qualified for a grant of £7,640.00, but just £4382.91 was available from the allocated funding to support their scheme. With the recycled money from the Mersey Bridge View, the Halton Carers grant now stands at £5,232.91.

Former Synergy building:

Grant of £10,000 awaits payment. Supplier information has been received and the recipient is set up for payment, works have been inspected and building control/ planning in place. Still need receipts. HBC in dialogue with the applicant, but the applicant is still having difficulties getting the receipts to us in the correct format. Town Team agreed that a deadline now has to be set for claiming this money as works should have ideally been claimed by the year end.

Action: It was agreed that Halton Officers should write to the applicant immediately to ask them to provide receipts within 14 days or else the grant money will be recycled. These receipts should relate to works that have been completed before year end.

4.3 Runcorn Street Market

There were no Street Market traders present at the meeting. However a query was raised by Syd Broxton (SB) about whether there was a cost to the Council for the road closure. It was explained that there were costs relating to security etc. but these were not specifically charged to traders. NPW noted that there have been some complaints received from market traders about pricing as shortly traders will be charged for frontage. Detailed responses had been provided where required. Will still charge £15 for a stall of 3 metres width. For this £15 stalls are erected and dismantled and stored and all waste is removed from site.

AG mentioned that she had heard mention of a new Wednesday market for Runcorn.

Action: AG to see if she can find out more about the Wednesday market as this would need permission from the Council.

4.4 Town Centre Map

All agreed that Halton BC Officers should instruct Open Spaces to remove existing sign as this is out of date. This will cost circa £300 - £400 depending on how much it costs to make area good when it is removed.

With regard to the new map AG noted that there were too many circles and asked if the shops annotation could be square. She asked if the Brindley could be its own colour and if food and drink businesses could be marked on. PS asked if all colours and fonts could be checked for colour blindness etc. RH asked if everyone present was happy for the map to be called Runcorn Old Town. All agreed. SB noted that it would be the best map that they had ever had.

GW queried the location of the telescope (as shown on the map) and it was explained that this is the same position as the existing telescopes and that careful consideration had been given to lenses etc. to check that all landmarks such as the new bridge could be seen from this position.

Action:

NPW noted that two versions of map being developed – a landscape and a portrait version and that we needed photographs of the Old Town to include on the portrait version of the map. If anybody has any suitable photographs they should be emailed to HBC Officers.

NPW noted that guidance is needed on the location of the new map and asked if the town team want this to go in the same position as the last sign or be located elsewhere. Cllr John Gerrard (JG) noted some options including Direct Link, Brindley, Canal, Top Locks, Runcorn Station etc. This would have cost and landownership issues and would need to be explored.

Action: Any other comments re: map to be emailed to HBC Officers, along with any feedback on locations for town centre map or other uses. Also, if anyone has any professional quality photographs of the Old Town that could be used on the map, please send to HBC Officers.

4.5 Additional Budget Items

An update was provided by NPW relating to items that the Town Team is hoping to commission with the additional £25k which needs to be spent/ committed to specific projects by 1 April 2015.

Telescope

NPW referred all present to the Briefing Note about the telescope and associated information board. All present agreed that it would be worth spending the additional money to ensure that the telescope would be accessible to all including children and wheelchair users. It was agreed that HBC Officers should investigate the costs of having two telescopes at different heights rather than a single telescope with the two arms at different heights as there was some concern about whether this would be robust or a target for vandalism as there would be an option for climbing onto it. Also need to check that telescopes cannot be rotated 360 degrees to prevent looking into adjacent properties.

Action: HBC Officers to report costs and options back to Town Team. Money to be reserved.

Town Centre App

NPW referred all present to the Briefing Note about the town centre app. DL explained that there were many advantages of apps and that she had spoken to other Councils who use them. Most apps include: A business directory with contact details and links to their websites; a town map; an events page either updated or linking to an external page, general info/history etc; and a reward and a loyalty/discount scheme. Most Councils started with a simple off the shelf package but added to this each year.

DL noted that most of the Councils that had been spoken to felt their app had worked well and filled a gap keeping local residents and visitors up to date with the events in the area and as a tool to find their way around as well as general information. She noted that the app can link to external websites so you can link it to other pages that are updated regularly with events etc.

However, the information on the app must be kept up to date. This means that updating the app is key but this could become a big, time consuming job in itself. Most of the Councils that had been spoken to have a dedicated team member who is responsible for inputting to the app or where individual businesses are responsible for updating their own information a moderator is in place to check what was being posted. In a lot of cases this is provided through a BID. Somebody needs to make sure all companies and traders have the same ability and access to update and use the app to their advantage so not to alienate certain businesses. Ann Turner Culverhouse asked if local colleges could provide this management service.

It was agreed that the app is beneficial. It is something that should be deferred for the time being due to lack of resources but revisit this at some point in the future. WR noted that we should feed this into the BID process.

Action: HBC Officers to feed into BID process. Not to be progressed at current time.

Hanging Baskets

All agreed that hanging baskets would be beneficial to the town centre. However costs with real flowers and practicalities of artificial flowers mean that this is prohibited. Agreed that should look to provide baskets to businesses who want them. Each business would need to be responsible for watering and take ownership. This needs to be actioned as soon as possible to have in place for the spring/ summer months.

PS noted that Halton in Bloom had been very successful and should be built upon.

Maria Tarn (MT) said that businesses could sponsor a basket in the garden that they are creating as part of Halton in Bloom.

Action: HBC Officer to explore prices of hanging baskets for shops with Open Spaces and action as soon as possible. Agreed that budget should be allocated to this.

Bin Outside Direct Link

NPW noted that HBC Officers had spoken with Street Scene and they agree that it would be beneficial to site a bin in this location and would cover costs of emptying. There is only one position and one bin type that would be suitable and this would cost £396 including installation. All agreed that this should be purchased.

Action: HBC Officers to purchase bin. Money to be allocated.

Market Container Repaint

NPW asked AG to explain about her involvement with this. She explained that a very quick decision had to be made about submitting an application for funding for a scheme to include a mural on the wall behind the market container along with the re-design of the container itself. Artwork to tie in with the anniversary of Runcorn (a market theme could be included on the container). One Red Shoe would be involved in the project which would be run as a community participation scheme if it received the necessary funding. There will also be issues to sort relating to consents from building owner etc. Town Team agreed to wait for outcome.

Lindsey Smith (LS) explained that an artist at Hazlehurst was also interested in the project and some preliminary costs had been sent through and could be progressed if the above project does not come into fruition.

Arts Programme Update

NPW asked MT to provide an update on Halton in Bloom. She explained the proposal and how community involvement was key. There would be a number of elements to their proposal this year including the garden which has an 'inside out' theme linked to Alice in Wonderland and there would also be an 'outside in' part of the project which would showcase some of the artists that are based at Hazlehursts. Also look to link to the 'Big Lunch'. A programme has been provided from March through to September. All supported proposals - **£2,000 allocated.**

A performance proposal has also been provided by CO3 for a dance/ poetry project with the local community, but some further clarification has been asked for about how the project links specifically to Runcorn. The revised proposal will be circulated in due course - **£2,000 allocated.**

Graffiti Removal

NPW noted that Chris Sweeting (Youth Offending Services) has clarified that they were hoping that a new contract with Youth Graffiti Solutions, as it was, would be progressed by their then third sector partners, but this has not come to fruition. Consequently they are continuing to undertake graffiti removal as part of their reparation effort as before and have been removing offensive graffiti in liaison with the Community Safety Partnership. This will continue, but they are no longer seeking contracts to fulfil in the way we were with the YGS Project.

Alternative Youth Project

NPW asked the Town Team if they would support proposals to move the allocated graffiti removal budget (£1,000) to a youth project. Look to link with NEETs. As Power in Partnership had now moved to the town centre into the former YMCA building, Claire Bradbury (CB) has been asked to provide ideas in liaison with Chris Sweeting. Claire noted that they could do something along a music theme in the evenings. The town team supported this town centre youth project.

Action: CB to put together proposal. Money to be allocated.

7.0 AOB

AG noted that there was the option of using the 2-4pm show on Halton Community Radio to advertise community/not-for-profit events etc. Contact Matt Roberts.

Thanks were passed to GB at Sabor for hosting the meeting and for the fabulous refreshments.

8.0 Next Meeting

The provisional date for the next meeting is **Wednesday, 10 June 2015 at 6pm.**
Venue to be confirmed.