

Runcorn Town Team Meeting

Wednesday 21st November 2018 at 6pm

Education Room, The Brindley, High Street, Runcorn, WA7 1BG

Minutes

Apologies:

Name	Organisation
Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Ann Turner Culverhouse	Resident
Gary Buckles	PCSO
Sara Munikwa	HBC Regeneration Manager
Claire Pitt	Hazlehurst Craft Studios
Maria Tarn	Hazlehurst Craft Studios
Rev Vicki Schofield	St Michael & All Angels

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
Cllr Pauline Sinnott	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Rosie Leck	HBC Mersey Ward Cllr
Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC Physical Env Portfolio Holder Cllr
Wesley Rourke	HBC Operation Director Economy, Enterprise and Property
Tim Gibbs	HBC Operational Director Policy, Planning and Transportation (Guest)
Chris Featherstone	HBC Community Engagement Officer
Claire Bradbury	Power in Partnership
Tony Collacott	Wat Phra Singh Temple
Alison Gleave	Halton & St Helens Voluntary Action/Resident
Graham Wallace	Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
Alex HayCroft	Blueball Brewery (new member)

Graduate Regeneration Officer- Natalie S – took meeting minutes

1. Welcome and quick introductions were made around the table

2. Terms of reference: Any revisions?

All members present did not have any revisions to present. The community based objectives are still relevant to the town's overarching plan so therefore remain in place.

It was suggested to review the achievements of the last 12 months during the next meeting and to encourage new businesses to come to future meetings.

3. Runcorn Station Quarter presentation and SJB delinking plans

All members were handed a print out of an extract from the masterplan which showed the options appraisal, an aerial view of the existing road lay out, an artist's impression of the whole concept including view from station, a plan of the new road lay out, a transport plan and land use zones across the station quarter.

Wesley and Tim presented an overview of the Runcorn Station masterplan and long term vision. It was stressed that this is just a concept document which provides possible opportunities in Runcorn Old Town for the future. It's a chance to show the key priorities at the forefront of the council's strategic view. This concept document outlines recommendations made to council board which would act as a catalyst for

regeneration in and around the Runcorn station quarter so it could become a gateway to the borough and surrounding areas. It was a prime opportunity to temporarily close the SJB as most of the infrastructure is no longer needed and the old aged bridge itself needed long overdue maintenance.

The document showcased short, medium and long term options of what could be realistically achieved if extra funding were to be secured to put some of these visions into a phased development. The first phase at this point and main priority is the de-linking of the 'trumpet loop' and new road and junction layout which will consist of a roundabout which links the old SJB to the station and old town which also opens up the space in the area. This is where the bulk of the secured council funds will be spent on. But long term aspirations are to improve the existing taxi area in front of the train station has aspirations to be aesthetically improved, creating attractive pedestrian space, greenery, views of Runcorn Old town and the bridges, a bus interchange, improved signage and mixed use developments including possible office and residential uses.

There is about 6ha of land to be developed on – so the document identifies suitable land use in and around the existing station area. Existing businesses had to be taken into account as to whether they will want to relocate or expand depending on where they are situated, so it's an important factor that there are various options for the design based on those eventualities after extensive consultations.

Currently, council officers are undertaking negotiations in meetings with potential and existing businesses, nearby residents, Rail operators, bus operators and taxi forums so the best outcome can be achieved. They are working with businesses to; discuss expansions of their current sites, seeking a business case for a new multi-story car park, suggesting the benefit of a hotel closer to the train station, and possible new custom housing developments.

These recommendations are long term visions, the priority at this point is appointing a private sector partner for the demolition of the old road link, 'trumpet loop' and the construction of the new roundabout linking with the A533 expressway.

De –linking of the SJB in more detail

Tim showed a presentation detailing the engineering side of things in terms of the dismantling of the old road infrastructure leading to the SJB in Runcorn and the maintenance needs of the SJB.

The SJB was to be reopened in autumn 2018, however the council strategically thought best to delay reopening so the demolition and new roundabout could be commissioned to avoid as much disruption to traffic as possible.

Reasons for the closure were primarily; to convert the road network from dual traffic to single lane traffic each way, to create new cycle ways, better pedestrian access, painting of the bridge arch, to fix corroded cables and to fit the new toll system.

The via duct leading northeast toward the bridge is to be taken out along with the trumpet loop – the via duct leading southeast is to stay but to be converted into a two way traffic access, with cars going onto the bridge and coming off bridge. So the one way system will cease. This existing southeast bound road could not be taken out because gas mains and fibre optics run underneath it along to the old town.

The plan for the new road network will consist of the roundabout with new access straight into the old town and the new bus interchange will pass the front of the train station therefore connecting the station directly with the town centre.

A 3D model is currently in development and will aim to give a better visualisation than an aerial view shown in the masterplan. It will aim to show visual views of the bridges once road has been taken out, which would be more aesthetically pleasing to commuters and visitors coming out the train station.

Current stage: The new road has gone in for planning to the committee.

4. Questions and feedback

Claire B: I've come across many online forums/social media which have given a lot of negative feedback regarding the pub etc, which say they need to be consulted. However I disagree with their comments and do believe it is a really good plan and what Runcorn needs.

Wesley: Unfortunately the media did not outline that the masterplan was just a concept and wider consultation will take place as we go forward.

Alison G: What will you see as you come out the station?

Wesley: It will have a plaza outside the station, a bus interchange and a layering effect which incorporates the changing levels, plus a view of the bridges.

Ron H: There seems to be a timeline confusion with general public, delays are to be expected as this is a long term plan, it will not take a year, it will be phased over time.

5. Updates:

Power in Partnership updates

There have been 106 young people, 16-18 since doors opened in September who are currently doing 3-4 qualifications. It was found that 95% have achieved in the region of a pass to outstanding qualifications. It's important to get them into positive activities to help keep them from spiralling down the wrong path. PIP have applied to Cheshire police for boxing sessions and professionals from Everton to inspire them to get onto the right track. Unfortunately gang crime has increased including knife crime, so they are working hard to encourage those negatively influenced into joining activities instead of turning to the streets.

Other programmes:

- 20+ drop in sessions for people struggling for work – assisting people with job searches including evening sessions
- Co-op to donate food for the sessions
- The charity Step Together could work with Graham's volunteers to create a 'Pay back team'
- It was also suggested to work with Power In Partnership once the canal is busier – end of next year new visitor centre to open
- Alison Gleave suggested Claire get in touch with an organisation called 'Train'

Navigation bell update on project

The main event was on the 10th October in the Brindley, unveiled by Mayor of Halton, Network Rail, the scheme manager spoke and a school designed a cake for the occasion.

- This has gained lots of interest, pictures taken by public and is becoming an heritage attraction
- This has been regarded as a positive event and all are grateful for the Town team grant contribution

Halton Lea Trading Quarter

- A unit has been constructed for a market on Tuesday 10am-3pm

- Shopping city has always had a market so this seems to be permanent
- Social media are discussing it – enthusiastic about it

Christmas in Runcorn:

Switch on - 30th November outside Iceland. There was a pantomime stage performance, Santa grotto etc, and a reindeer parade.

- Winterfest 2018 – 1st/2nd Dec – Gift stalls, bar, street food, Santa’s grotto, live music etc.
- Community garden Christmas decorating event ‘Deck the Garden’ – 7th Dec, 10am-3pm
- Carol service – 22nd December 11am

Runcorn Unlocked – updates on Christmas event

The following items were discussed in regarding preparation – the next meeting will update on the success of the event.

- Stalls/vendors, acts are all set up
- Parking is still to be organised – residents need to be told about parking – resident parking permits.
- There will be marshals patrolling event
- Visitors will be directed to the event
- Signage to be provided for the event
- Runcorn festival website has all the information
- Santa Claus to travel on a canal boat – then on to sleigh to grotto, live music, choir
- Electronic version of plan to be made available
- Countryside partnership – Wesley had sent a notification regarding the event

6. Discussion – Any other items? – All

- Any new member suggestions for the New Year?
- Graham has recommended Alex Haycroft who manages Bluebell Brewery in Runcorn, naturally community orientated, involved in the winter festival and is doing a great job in helping organise the event.
- Map of the town centre needs updating, the station quarter needs adding onto the map – NS to look into this

7. Date for next meeting - February 2019