

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 7.00PM IN THE CIVIC CENTRE

PRESENT: Cllr A Kendall (Chairman), Cllr A Wilkinson, Jeff and Janet Walshe (Heritage Centre & Town Hall Teas), Cllr P Smith, Cllr R Claydon, Mrs C Sweet (Dementia Connections), Cllr P Barton (from 7.10pm), Mrs T McLusky (Beaumont-le-Roger Society - from 7.30pm)
In Attendance: Deputy Clerk Mrs Y Milsom

822. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Canon Axford, Mr M Clarke, Cllr T Luker, Mrs J Tebb, Mrs P Smith, Mr G Phillips

823. Declarations of Interest - There were no Declarations of Interest.

824. Minutes of the Town Regeneration Partnership Committee Meeting held on 13th June 2016

It was agreed all in favour to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2016 as a correct record. New members were introduced and welcomed to the Committee.

825. Community Action Plan

a) This meeting would concentrate on the first two Actions in the Community Action Plan.

Action 1 – Need for a diverse selection of shops and reduction in number of vacant premises. It was noted that there had been some improvement recently, with several new lettings of vacant premises. The rateable value of the empty shop on the corner of Market Street/Long Street is being reviewed this year and it was hoped this might lead to a rate reduction, thus making the premises a more viable prospect. Mrs Sweet was considering acquiring premises to give a presence in the town for her Trust in You Community Interest Company, possibly sharing with another compatible organisation, as a place to come with ideas and to connect people. The Chamber of Trade were to meet with representatives of the Co-op for discussions.

Cllr P Barton entered the meeting

Action 2 – Improve condition of verges, pavements and footways. The Town Council Caretaker had taken on some town weeding and tidying, although the amount of time spent on this had been affected this year by him taking on extra duties for several months whilst the Buildings Manager had been on sick leave/light duties. However, there had been significant improvements. It was suggested that the Caretaker and equipment could be dropped off to tackle outlying areas of the town which were looking unkempt. Mrs Tebb had sent in a report detailing recent volunteer work weeding the town centre ready for the Tour of Britain and the Blues Festival. She also requested an increase in the Town Regeneration budget next year to allow for more cleaning/weeding; and mentioned that many of the traders think it is the Council's responsibility to clean shop frontages and that it would be helpful if they were made aware that this is not the case. This message would be included in the next Chamber of Trade newsletter but this has been done previously to little effect. The Scouts were litter-picking the OK path shortly. It was noted that Stroud District Council had for many years organised spring cleans in the various towns in the district and these had been very successful and a good way to get people involved in caring for the town. The Deputy Clerk would find out whether these were ongoing. It was noted that the system for utilising Leyhill prisoners for this type of work had changed. Cllr Barton would investigate. It was also suggested that people who were finding it difficult to get back into work might be able to assist, which in turn might improve their employment prospects.

Mrs McLusky entered the meeting

Improving the town for those with physical and visual impairments was difficult because of the historic nature of the town centre buildings. Many of the shops had steps into them which could not be changed. It would be helpful if shopkeepers would deter from putting out signs/produce on the pavements where they are particularly narrow. It was noted that the face-high brambles in Synwell Hill had been problematic for visually impaired people, although these had now been cut back. It was noted that many visitors were enthusiastic about the town.

b) It was agreed that Items 3 and 9 on the Action Plan would be addressed at the next meeting.

826. Farmers Market

A report prepared by the Deputy Clerk was considered. It was expensive to advertise in market trade magazines. The Farmers Market was currently too small to attract many customers. A more radical approach was suggested in the form of a general and much larger outdoor market, perhaps on High Street, with an offer of free pitches for a short period to encourage stallholders to come. It was considered that this was not practical with the current infrastructure and was something that could be pursued if the car parking issue was resolved. It was suggested that this should be part of a long-term plan. In the meantime, the current Farmers Market was being subsidised by the Town Council and members needed to consider whether this should continue. It was suggested that stallholders could be offered a free stall for six months to try to encourage extra stalls and that these could include craft stalls and perhaps one fund-raising stall per month, as had been done previously. It was noted that this would not address the problem of stalls that were already committed to other markets. The extra cost would have to be covered by the Council precept. The Deputy Clerk was asked to prepare figures showing the extra cost to be covered against budget availability for this Financial Year, to be considered at the October meeting of the Town Council. This would be a short term measure until the car parking issue was resolved and an open air market could be considered.

827. Dementia Friendly Town

Christine Sweet's Trust in You Community Interest Company was registered with the Dementia Action Alliance and had been running a Memory Group in the town for almost one year. She suggested some actions that could be taken for Wotton to become a dementia-friendly town, such as Councillors and businesses participating in Dementia Friends sessions or watching a Dementia Friends online video so that they can become aware and learn to understand and support those people affected by the condition. They would then need to register with the Dementia Action Alliance and formulate an Action Plan. A number of businesses in the town have a Keep Safe scheme sticker in their windows, which indicates a safe place for those who feel vulnerable when out and about, including people with dementia, but staff often have no idea what it means. Mrs Sweet, as the local Keep Safe Representative is giving advice accordingly. Mrs Sweet and other Dementia Friends Champions can provide the Dementia Friends sessions and it was agreed to progress this for Town Councillors, members of this Committee and members of the Chamber of Trade. It was further agreed to register with the Dementia Action Alliance and for this Committee to formulate an action plan as part of this. Mrs Sweet would provide relevant information.

828. Walking Festival

This was to take place on the weekend 5th-7th May 2017. A meeting was arranged for later this week at which the programme would be put together and then the event would be advertised. The Cotswold Book Room were going to do a window display. There had been a lot of interest.

829. Rope Walk Toilets Area

Work was progressing and already there was an amazing improvement. There had been a lot of support from passers-by whilst work was in progress. The area had suffered from vandalism in the past but it was hoped that the CCTV coverage would act as a deterrent. It was noted that the metal 'Toilets' sign and signpost needed cleaning.

830. Poster for Newark Park

A poster and Wotton leaflets had been taken to Newark Park. However, several members who had visited the attraction had not seen the poster. Mrs McLusky was visiting the following day and would look out for it.

831. Reports from Partners

a) Town Hall Teas were going very well and were all booked up for both this year and 2017, including bank holiday Mondays. Groups would like to pass on their thanks to Town Council for the use of the hall – it is much appreciated and raises much needed funds for local groups

b) Wotton Heritage Centre - August was the best month so far with a record number of 853 visitors. The new shop is doing well and the display of merchandise is attracting people into the Centre and has received a lot of favourable comments. The latest display is entitled Wotton on the Map and includes Tithe maps, photographs taken from the air of Wotton going back in time etc. A lot of information is being compiled and given out in the Visitor Information part of the Centre. Two new history boards of Wotton are displayed on the wall in the front area, along with a timeline. They have 11 new volunteers on board and are now open 6 days a week, including Saturdays and Sundays. The front of the Centre has new signage, flower baskets and a garden. Funds have been raised to replace the last of the old cabinets - important as it is an accredited museum. They are hosting their last Town Hall Tea of the year in October and hope to hold a fundraiser in the Town Hall next year with a movie / Hollywood theme. The new Historical Society Journal is out, distributed to members by email and available to purchase to non-members for a donation of £2.00. The Wotton 2017 Calendar is now on sale at the Centre and outlets around the town for £6.50. They are members of the Chamber of Trade and are happy to promote events and sell tickets for organisations within the town. Their Facebook site is doing well with 1040 followers. Councillor June Cordwell attends their meetings and also helps in the Centre. They would like to thank the One Stop Shop staff for suggesting that they should open on Mondays to take advantage of visitors staying in the area over the weekend - Mondays were their busiest day. They would be open for the Christmas event and would also have a stall in Market Street.

c) Tourism Network Meeting – Jeff and Janet Walshe had recently attended a Tourism Network meeting which was looking to develop a strategy for promoting tourism in the area covering Berkeley, Dursley, Slimbridge, Stone and Wotton. They want to develop a name and identity for this area to market it as a tourist destination. The meetings take place in a different town each time and Wotton is to host the next meeting at the Civic Centre. When the date is confirmed this will be circulated so that Councillors, Committee members and other interested parties can attend. Janet has compiled a list of Wotton's Annual events for the group, plus a Bed & Breakfast accommodation list, and would be happy to include others if people could let her know. It had been interesting to note that those attending this meeting considered Wotton to be a very vibrant town and something of a benchmark for what a small town can offer.

d) Chamber of Trade – The planning application for the car park and housing near to the Fire Station will shortly be submitted. The developer will hand over the car park to the Town Council upon completion. The Chamber of Trade is facilitating raising funds to provide lighting, electric car charging points and CCTV coverage.

e) Memory Group – In October they will be celebrating their first year of operating in Wotton.

f) Under the Edge Arts – A report was circulated from Martin Clarke detailing their Autumn programme, which includes the inaugural Wotton Blues Festival on 24/25 September, the first such multi-venue event in the town, spread over four pubs, two coffee shops, Wotton Cinema, the Town Hall and the Arts Centre. Moira Buist of Wotton Directory was thanked for putting together the programme and for advertising support. Support was also appreciated from Wotton Town Council, Magnox, Renishaw, Wickwar Brewery, St Austell Brewery and many others. All performances are free. They hope this will bring a lot of new visitors to the town. Other forthcoming events include a jazz evening on Oct 1 and the Wotton's Got Talent event, which has been rebranded as the Edge Factor. Fish out of Water Gallery has been appointed as the ticket box office to supplement online and telephone bookings. Next spring they will be holding a fundraising gardens, sculpture and open studios trail on April 30 and, May 1 2017 in collaboration with the annual Wotton Arts Festival. It will also promote the Wotton Secret Gardens Trail on Sunday 28 May 2017. They are working on a plan to improve the courtyard area of The Chipping Hall and the use of the facades

on two sides. A proposal will be put to their landlord, the Town Trust and, if supported, thence to Listed Buildings. They will also be proposing a lease extension as part of the same exercise.

g) Arts Association – Their AGM will take place on 13th October 2016. The New Year's Eve concert will take place at St Mary's church as usual.

h) Wotton in Bloom – A report from Mrs Tebb was circulated, some of which had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Other points mentioned included a very successful season for Wotton in Bloom with lots of compliments from visitors and residents alike. The new troughs on the raised pavement in Old Town have been very well-received. They have been asked why they do not enter Britain in Bloom but, although there have been improvements, they do not consider the town is clean or tidy enough for an entry.

i) It was noted that, during a recent car park survey, Councillors had spoken to a number of people who visited the town because they like it here. It is important not to lose the features which attract them.

832. Any Other Brief Reports

Details were circulated of an invitation to join the Stroud District Heritage and Cultural Network, a meeting formerly attended by Cllr June Cordwell. It was understood that the Network was primarily concerned with Stroud itself.

833. Dates for Future Meetings

The next meeting was scheduled for 7th November 2016.

This completed the business of the Town Regeneration Partnership Committee

Signed:

Dated:

Chairman of the Town Regeneration Partnership