

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2014 AT 7.30PM IN THE CIVIC CENTRE

PRESENT: Councillor J Cartigny (Chairman), Reverend R Axford (St Mary's Church), Councillor R Claydon (Town Mayor), Councillor Mrs C Galbraith, Mr T Mason (Cinema), Mrs T McLusky (Beaumont-le-Roger), Mrs D Moss (Churches Together), Mr G Phillips (Wotton Arts Association and Under-the-Edge Arts), Mrs P Smith (Fair Trade Town), Mrs J Walshe (Heritage Centre), Ms H Brewer (Wotton Christmas Event), Ms J Sennitt (Wotton Christmas Event)

IN ATTENDANCE: Deputy Clerk Mrs Y Milsom

715. Apologies

Ms S Hunt, Mr V Jotcham, Councillor P Smith

716. Welcome

Members welcomed, and introduced themselves to, Hesper Brewer and Jasbir Sennitt, part of the group who organised the Wotton Christmas Event.

717. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11th November 2013.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Agreed all in favour.

718. Updates

a) Flower beds – The Town Clerk is taking on the planting of the War Memorial planters for this coming season. The Gardening Club has been approached regarding possibly taking on the planting of the flower beds at Parklands, but have yet to respond. However, the planting of flowerbeds for the forthcoming season is still included in the current Grounds Maintenance contract and so any changes would not come into effect until October 2014.

b) Wotton in Bloom – This will be the fifth year of Wotton in Bloom. This year the baskets have had to be replaced due to deterioration and the new baskets will be a different shape. Some of the brackets also need replacing. The Town Council has agreed to take over the watering contract this year, which will enable the VAT to be reclaimed and thus save overall costs. The Town Council will pay £2000 of the watering costs from its own budget, the same amount given as a grant last year, with the remaining sum coming from Wotton in Bloom in the form of a grant to the Town Council. The Gazette will publish a piece about the hanging baskets scheme this week. Several members commented that some of the traders were unhappy that the Town Council contributed to this scheme and to the Christmas Trees in the street as they felt the money should be spent on other things. It was pointed out that the majority of the cost of Wotton in Bloom is met by fundraising and payments for the baskets, which this year would cost of £40 each.

c) Town Hall Teas A-Boards

Six new A-Boards had been purchased and members were very pleased with them. It was suggested that they should be suitably anchored to something when in use. All of the Sunday Town Hall Teas are booked for this year, with just three bank holiday Monday bookings still available. They will start the first Sunday in April. The record takings for a single Town Hall Tea in the 2013 season was £890, the average being around £250. The Clerk confirmed that the Town Hall was licensed so that background music could be played at the Teas. It was requested that a sticker showing this licensing status be displayed.

d) Finger Posts

The Clerk confirmed that the finger post for the Arts Centre had been in place on the Chipping Green for around three years. The one at the Rope Walk had been overlooked but was also now in place. It was noted that posters are sometimes attached to the finger posts, which remove some of the paint when they are taken down. It was suggested that the posts should be re-painted.

719. Community Plan

The Town Mayor explained the differences between the current types of community plans. Neighbourhood Plans and Village Design Statements involve following rigorous procedures, including support by a referendum before the plan can be adopted. Neighbourhood Plans are pro-development. Wotton is not scheduled in the Stroud District Council Local Plan for any large-scale development and the Town Council considered Neighbourhood Plans not to be relevant for the town. Village Design Statements seek to influence the placing of, and materials used, in new developments to ensure they are in keeping with the local area. Some years ago the Town Council produced a Community Plan following a comprehensive 'Healthcheck' process. These plans were quite significant at the time, requiring extensive community involvement and consultation. The Town Council has been criticised for not updating the plan. The District Council is supposed to take note of work done by local parishes when considering planning applications, so this type of plan does still have some relevance, but the existing plan for Wotton is probably not sufficiently up-to-date to have any influence. However, such plans and updates have little merit unless underpinned by research and input from the community. There is currently a grant of up to £500 available from Stroud District Council towards the costs of updating, but this requires detailed estimates of expected costs and has strict time parameters. Members were asked for their thoughts on whether or not the Community Plan should be updated and how this might best be accomplished. Members suggested that, if the plan could be updated with a minimum of expense and effort then it should be pursued but not if it required a lot of time and expense. It was suggested that local groups, such as the Sports Foundation and Swimming Pool, might have valuable data which they would have compiled for recent funding bids and which they may be willing to share. It was suggested that, in the first instance, local groups could be approached to ask if they would be willing to help and if they have any background information which could be used.

720. 800th Anniversary of the Granting of the Magna Carta

It was noted that June 2015 marks the 800th anniversary of the Granting of the Magna Carta. National plans to mark the anniversary would include touring exhibitions and an education programme. Members were asked to consider if they wished to celebrate this anniversary in any way. The information was passed to Mrs Walshe for the Heritage Centre.

721. Reports from Partners

a) Youth Liaison – There are now two different youth providers at the Youth Centre operating on different evenings. The more recent provider is being funded for 12 months by the Youth Liaison group. Both evenings are very successful apart from some anti-social behaviour issues. Wotton Youth Centre is by far the most successful youth club of the SOSYP towns of Wotton, Cam, Dursley and Berkeley.

b) Sports Foundation – Business meetings are taking place each month with KLB School with a view to creating a joint venture company to manage the sports facilities, both at the school and Sports Foundation site. It was hoped that this would be finalised by September. The Sports Foundation facilities are proving to be a big success with many users expressing their gratitude. Individual Sports Foundation members have had to visit the site daily to turn the lights on and off but a timer has now been installed. There are some issues with the impact the lights are having on neighbouring properties which need to be resolved, but the general feedback is that the facilities have transformed sport activities in the town.

c) In Our Towns – This was an initiative which arose from the Portas review of high streets. Funding was given to promote the high streets of four towns, namely Wotton, Dursley, Painswick and Stroud. Stroud Life were contracted to do advertising and PR work for the project. At a meeting last week it was decided not to continue the initiative as it had not really been effective. Finding common ground across the four towns was recognised as a major difficulty. Approximately £4000 of the funding was still unspent and this would be available to support festivals within each participating town, up to a maximum of £1000 each. It was noted that a government checklist was available to festival organisers from GAPTC. It was suggested that Market Street should be closed on each Farmers' Market day to make it more visible and enable it to expand, with occasional themed markets to attract more visitors. This would need to be discussed with the current organiser of the market. It was suggested that the Town Council could investigate the cost and procedure for regular street closures.

d) Chamber of Trade – The Chamber has suffered a decline in membership recently. However, the former president of the Chamber of Trade, Alex Wilkinson, has now returned to the helm and is visiting businesses to try to regenerate membership. The website will be revamped and the Breakfast and Supper Clubs reinstated. There is a divide between businesses and traders in the town. Many of the traders need to be convinced that networking is worthwhile and Mr Wilkinson is trying to emphasize the value of membership and the need for them to be represented on the committee. It was suggested that the Breakfast and Supper clubs could adopt a different approach to make traders feel more comfortable by trying to find a middle-ground between hi-tech and lo-tech businesses. Some of the benefits of membership, for example free recruitment advertising on the website, can offset the cost of subscription fees.

e) Heritage Centre – Currently, finances for the running costs of the Centre are very tight. They have applied for several grants and are running a number of fund-raising events, including Town Hall Teas once a month, which is their only regular source of income. £970 was raised recently at an event at the cinema and funding for new lighting is almost there. Bill Griffiths book on Wotton soldiers killed in the First World War is on its third print run and James Walshe has visited the Somme and photographed the graves of soldiers mentioned in the book. These pictures would be displayed in the Heritage Centre. They are looking to connect with businesses with a view to possible sponsorship. They are planning to hold regular ‘Coffee and Cookie’ open mornings, the first one being on 1st March 2014. On Easter weekend some of their larger items will be on display at the Arts Centre as part of the “Wotton’s Hidden Treasures” programme.

f) CAB – A fund-raising concert of the Gloucestershire Police Male Voice Choir would be held at Minchinhampton Church on 1st March 2014 to raise funds for the Stroud District CAB.

g) Wotton Cinema – The current management committee will stand down on 31st March 2014 and from 1st April 2014 the cinema will be under the new management of Gareth Negus and Sam Osborn, who have significant experience in cinema management. They will both be paid Executive Directors of the cinema and will be supported by a small group of volunteers. They will take over the day-to-day operational responsibility of the cinema for a period of one year, at which point they will have the option to purchase the company from Wotton Electric Picture House Ltd. The current co-operative will be phased out over that period and any proceeds will go to the Cinema Trust, part of Wotton Recreational Trust. During this initial one year period there will also be three unpaid non-executive Directors appointed from the existing management committee to monitor the performance of the business and to ensure that the interests of the shareholders and the wider community are fully represented. The new management plan to have more shows, improved advanced booking, plus opportunities for local traders to advertise on the pre-show. They will also show nine minutes of Pearl & Dean advertising. Many of the current special uses will continue, including the schools’ film festival and shows for disabled groups.

h) Fair Trade – Fair Trade fortnight will run from 24th February 2014 to 10th March 2014. A coffee morning will be held on 22nd February 2014 at Holy Cross Church.

i) Arts Association – The New Year’s Eve concert was very successful. The Arts Festival will run from 25th April 2014 to 4th May 2014 and the St George’s Day celebration will be on 26th April 2014. Numerous events have been lined up for the festival and flyers listing the events will be available soon.

j) Under-the-Edge Arts – A ‘Have Your Say Day’ will be held on Saturday 15th February with the AGM starting at 3pm on that same day. The tenth anniversary celebration would be held in Kingswood Village Hall on Saturday, 15th March 2014 and would include a meal and a promises auction. They are looking into resurrecting the Arts Forum, a meeting of the various arts groups in the Stroud District.

k) St Mary’s Church – The Festival of Light, celebrating the 250th anniversary of the gifting of the chandelier to the Church, was a great success, with many organisations represented on the Saturday evening. The successful weekend continued on the Sunday with around 200 people attending the ‘Darkness to Light’ Advent service. The Christingle service on Christmas Eve was attended by around 600 people. The junior choir enhanced the Advent and Carol service. Around 250 to 300 youngsters attended the church in January for a vigil and to sign a Book of Remembrance following the death of one of their friends. The Concert Series this year commences on 22nd February 2014. Messy Church for families

continues to be a success and they are looking at introducing something specifically for older children. They are also compiling a Statement of Needs, looking into making the Church more usable for the whole community.

l) Baptist Church – The Living Crib has, for the last 3 years, been hosted by the Baptist Church. It has been suggested that the Living Crib procession could become part of the Christmas Event, with perhaps different elements, such as shepherds and wise men with camels, converging from different parts of the town. It was suggested that this could generate publicity for the event. The idea would be considered by the event organisers.

m) Churches Together – The Christmas Card distributed to Wotton households showing the schedule of Christmas services was appreciated. Lent house groups would be running as usual. Easter services would include the Good Friday Procession of Witness and the sunrise service on Easter Sunday, the latter to be followed by breakfast at St Mary's.

n) Beaumont-le-Roger – Twenty French families are visiting Wotton this year. One of the events organised for their visit is dinner at Highfields in their new restaurant. They will be the first group to enjoy the hospitality of the new restaurant.

o) Christmas Event – A group of local mums had organised the event in December 2013. They started with very little money and only about two months to organise the event. They were fortunate to have good weather and the attendance was good despite there being little advertising. The next step was to debrief and set up a date for this year, and they now have some money in reserve to assist the process. Members congratulated them on a very successful event.

722. Any Other Reports

The Chairman no longer lives in Wotton and so this Partnership would need a new chairman in the near future. Members were asked to give this matter some thought.

723. Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 12th May 2014.

The Chairman thanked members for attending.

This completed the business of the Town Regeneration Partnership.

Signed:

Dated:

Chairman of the Town Regeneration Partnership