

DURSLEY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES and REPORT of the MEETING of the TOWN IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE of the Council held in the Methodist Church meeting room at 7:30pm on Tuesday, 11th January 2022 for presentation to the Council on Thursday 20 January 2022.

PRESENT

Councillors: D Savvidou (Chair), P Hayes, W Thomas, A Rowston, T White, M Woodward, J Rubin and T Kinnison.

In Attendance: L Wellings (Deputy Town Clerk).

Absent: Councillor A Whitwell

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were accepted from Councillors D Cornell and S Ackroyd (personal).

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no representations from the public.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Improvements Committee held on Tuesday 12th October 2021, having been circulated among the members were taken as read, confirmed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. CHAIR'S VERBAL REPORT

The Chair reported that, following Stroud District Council's decision to fund a district wide Tourism post, discussions were taking place between the market towns involved in the project regarding how their original 2021/22 £5k contributions could be reallocated and spent in support of tourism by 31/03/22. The Deputy Town Clerk had attended a meeting earlier in the day to discuss ideas. An idea to jointly commission a professional copywriter to produce high quality formatted promotional content for each contributing town, which could then be used for websites, social media and other promotional material, was being investigated. A proposal should be available for consideration shortly.

6. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE REARRANGEMENT OF SEATING IN THE PAVED AREA ADJACENT TO THE TOWN HALL

It was noted that the Council is awaiting a response from a Highways Officer who had been approached regarding the above request and information about any underground public utilities. It was noted that a response had yet to be received and would be chased by the Deputy Town Clerk.

7. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON INSTALLING A NOTICEBOARD ON ROSEBERY ROAD

It was noted that the Co-operative had agreed to the installation of a noticeboard on the store building and permission had been obtained from the landlord. Council was awaiting the license terms from the Co-operative's legal department which was a requirement of the

permission. The agreed noticeboard would be purchased following confirmation of the legal agreement.

8. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON A NEW BUS SHELTER AT SOMERSET AVENUE

An update from the Council's Project Officer was shared. It was noted that passenger survey work undertaken and planned during 2021 had been impacted by disruption to the bus service, due to covid and summer holidays; funding for a hard standing could be provided by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and 50% funding for the shelter could be provided by the GCC Community Match funding scheme.

IT WAS AGREED that the passenger survey work would be rescheduled to take place in March/April 2022, with the help of a Cam and Dursley Transportation Group volunteer.

9. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON FESTIVE DURSLEY

a) The meeting held on 10th January 2022 to review the switch on event and activities. Councillor Woodward gave an update. It was noted that the group had received good feedback. There had been some issues with the co-ordination of the music performances in the market place and lighting, overall everything had gone well and the grotto had seen a record 65 children. Improvements would be considered for 2022. The group had started to consider plans and ideas for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, a Facebook post seeking feedback and ideas had already been published.

Members agreed that the feedback received had been good; Festive Dursley were thanked for all their hard work.

b) Investigations into a town PA system.

It was noted that investigations were ongoing into the supply and installation of a suitable PA system for the town centre; funding had already been secured through the GCC Build Back Better Fund.

10. REGARDING TOURISM

a) To receive an update on the Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale Tourism Network.

It was noted that the Network had been quiet over the Covid pandemic but had continued to issue newsletters, the Steering Group itself had not met for some time. The Deputy Town Clerk had discussed recent tourism developments with the existing Network Chair (e.g. the creation of the Visit Gloucestershire partnership, Stroud District Council's decision to fund a Tourism Officer post, the www.visitstroud.uk website). The Chair had agreed to compile a newsletter which would aim to discuss the future of the Network.

b) To receive an update on the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) at Dursley Library.

It was noted that the new partnership agreement document between the Library Service and Dursley Town Council had now been received and would be signed by both parties. The document covered the necessary changes agreed to cover the extension of the VIC trial period for 1 year.

c) To receive an update on the creation of a Tourism Officer post funded by Stroud District Council.

It was noted that Stroud District Council would be hosting a meeting on 14th January 2022, with Market Town representatives, to discuss the new Tourism Officer role, the recruitment process and work programme.

11. REGARDING DURSLEY PANCAKE RACE 2022

a) To note that the race is due to take place on Shrove Tuesday 1st March 2022.

The event details were noted, members were asked to volunteer to help provide marshal support on the day.

IT WAS AGREED that people should be invited to participate in the usual fancy dress but with a royal theme, to fit in with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

b) To consider a charitable beneficiary for sponsorship funds.

IT WAS RESOLVED that any sponsorship funds raised this year would go towards the new 'Heads Upp Dursley' group, in support of their work around mental health.

Councillor White abstained from the vote having declared an interest as a Co-ordinator of the group.

12. TO CONSIDER WELCOME BACK FUNDING PROPOSALS

Members considered information from Stroud District Council regarding the allocation of Welcome Back Funds to date (£50k) and the remaining funds (£50k) yet to be allocated.

It was noted that the following ideas had been submitted to meet the short deadline request for further spend ideas in Dursley, within the strict criteria, these were:

- £1,400 - 2 new benches - Uley Road/Henlow Drive.
- £500 - New planters, soil and plants for the Council's green railings on Castle Street.
- £2000 – Development of new Visit Dursley website to promote the town.

(costs given were estimates)

Stroud had indicated that these ideas would be acceptable but outlined criteria that must be met in relation to any website.

Members suggested that Council try and get funding for further items and discussed ideas relating to more seating, maintenance and planting. It was recognised that it might not be feasible to deliver a suitable website within the tight funding timeframe (Jan 2022 – March 2022) but that it should be explored at least before being ruled out. (Further ideas were suggested under minute item 14)

IT WAS AGREED that a further request to Stroud District Council would be made for 2 additional benches (for top of Whiteway/Broadway); Dursley in Bloom would be asked if there were any further planting requirements that could be submitted and the website idea would be further explored to see if it could be realistically delivered within the criteria and timeframe.

13. TO CONSIDER THE STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND AGREE A RESPONSE

The published draft strategy above was considered alongside the Council's previous consultation response to Stroud District Council. Members discussed page 19 and the priority areas identified for each parish cluster. There was some confusion and disagreement with the priority areas identified, for example, as a Market Town 'tourism and the visitor economy' had not been selected which appeared to be at odds with recent work discussions between the Market Towns and the District, which had highlighted the importance of tourism to our local economy. It was felt that all the areas were important.

IT WAS AGREED that the Council's original comments and response still stood. In relation to page 19, the Deputy Town Clerk would seek further background information from Stroud District Council regarding the 3 priority areas identified for Cam and Dursley and the thinking behind the selection, why it's been made and on what basis these areas were

chosen as priorities. The consultation response would be considered and sent following clarification of these points.

14. TO GENERATE IDEAS FOR THE CREATION OF A STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR DURSLEY THAT COVERS TOURISM, DIGITAL PROMOTION, EVENTS AND MARKET ACTIVITIES

It was noted that Councillors Savvidou, Cornell and Ackroyd would be meeting as a working group in the coming weeks to look at developing a Council strategy and action plan to cover the above activities, which link to the town’s local economy and how it could be supported. The work would take into consideration the Council’s existing Strategic Plan, Climate Change and Environmental Issues Mission Statement, as well as Stroud District Council’s new Economic Development Strategy.

Members put forward ideas which could be considered as part of this work, as follows:

- Complete a SWOT analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that exist, using the information we have.
- Promotion of the town - Dursley needs to shout (loudly!) about what it has to offer.
- Visitors and Residents are both important – Promotions should cover visitors and local residents (some residents don’t know what’s available in the town).
- Website – Develop a ‘Visit Dursley’ website that gives us control of a digital ‘shopfront’ that can still be linked to websites such as VisitStroud and others.
- How can we make the Market Place more attractive/usable?
- Encouraging pride in the town is important, it encourages a positive view of the town and that reflects out to visitors/residents.
- Make the most of our heritage e.g. Water Street area/assets.
- Embrace technology which can help us promote the town e.g. virtual reality overlays/tours/interactive maps and apps.
- Identify groups/projects in the town that are trying to support the local economy - are there opportunities to support/work together? e.g. The Engine Project
- Could we get further Welcome Back funding to make the Market Place more attractive and develop virtual reality overlays? (Councillor Kinnison agree to forward further information on this technology)

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:36pm.

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Chairman

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Date