

Future Oswestry – 13th August 2019 11.30 am
Oswestry Town Council, Council Chamber

Attendees:

Cllr Steve Charmley (Shropshire Council), Cllr Chris Schofield (Town Council) Cllr Sandy Best (Town Council and retired Mayor), Adele Nightingale (BID) Arren Roberts (OTC) Joe Bubb, Hayley Owen and Coralee Standish (SC Economic Growth)

Apologies: Cllr Robert Macey (Shropshire Council), Ian Follington (BID)

1. Welcome and introductions provided by Cllr Steve Charmley Chair outlining group's strategic role for a fast forward delivery.

2. Notes of the last meeting

The notes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. Matters arising would be picked up through agenda items.

3. Declarations of interest

Cllr Steve Charmley asked that any declarations of interest be noted during the meeting. None declared.

4. Priority Projects

It was formally noted that the bid for the Future High Street Fund had been unsuccessful. There will be a second round in 2020. The feedback was generic and disappointing and it was clear that those successful in their bid were areas that had high levels of deprivation. It was considered that there was a bigger question about whether, going forward, this would be the right funding pot for Oswestry but the exercise was considered useful and if any future funding opportunities arise, the group will have progressed some key steps in regards to evidence gathering e.g. surveys.

LEP funding has been secured to undertake a refresh of the masterplan for the Innovation Park and a ground conditions survey of land owned by the Council at Park Hall. Further development appraisal work will be undertaken for the wider growth corridor to be funded through the One Public Estate programme funding.

a) Empty Properties and Business Support

Oswestry's High Street survey work has been completed. Emma Smith is working on collating this to feed into the Market Towns Survey. The results of the survey will be available in September.

BID has purchased access to GOAD maps (The maps are named for Charles E. Goad who first produced such things for Fire Insurance companies). There are opportunities to utilise the maps to e.g. show patterns of occupancy. Sandy will bring in a map that shows the shops from 1970s.

Once the results of the survey have been considered and a vision has been drawn together by this group, there is potential to contact the agents/owners of the empty properties with a positive rationale for improving the facades and fabric of the empty properties and to discuss marketing. Officers will work on a "What If?" scenario around one or two empty properties looking at various options and look into options with Public Protection on approaches to Agents/Owners. The discussions around Units could also consider alternative uses.

Stuart Phillips on the BID Board has arranged a meeting of the Commercial Estate Agents in September to discuss the empty units that are on their agents' books. An aim is to sound out the estate agents to discuss what they think the problems are and how they are marketing the units.

As part of these discussions, a 'package' of an offer exploring the vision e.g. "Invest in Oswestry" was suggested which could be promoted to Agents to market Oswestry and the available properties.

BID website "One Oswestry" has been launched; with an "Invest" link. There was discussion around using the 'package' of an offer to approach current Shropshire independent retailers, locally "grown" retailers to encourage investing in Oswestry rather than too much reliance on trying to attract the national/large high street retailers.

Emma Chapman from the Growth Hub is to be approached in order to give some insight around business enquiries and support for businesses in the Oswestry area. Feedback will be brought to the FOG.

b) Festival Square

Date in August was not possible. Saturday 26th October – Halloween weekend and Saturday 11th April 2020 (Easter theme as it is the Saturday before Easter) have been pencilled in. BID to co-ordinate the activities.

Events insurance is being arranged.

David Clough of OTC has a Halloween market – activities for children to tie up to compliment this.

Discussion about trails to encourage public to different parts of the town, which could include businesses creating themed shop windows; press being involved; costs of stalls. Re Shrewsbury BID equipment; it could be borrowed but may be unsuitable due to Shrewsbury BID logo on some of it.

c) Traffic Regulations

Town Centre Traffic Survey for businesses is to be resent to Sandy - Adele to resend. Arren reported that he and Joe had met with Shaun Sutton and Grant Tunnadine from Shropshire Council regarding traffic orders. There has not been a traffic regulations review of the whole town. Kevin Aitken and Grant Tunnadine have looked at Bailey Street and Bailey Head and, working with Councillor Milner, have come up with a scheme which will need to be presented to the Town Council for their consideration. With the general enforcement issue and the gaps in infrastructure, FOG acknowledged there is a need for a formal piece of work in order to consider the correct restrictions (disabled parking / loading / signage etc) in place. This needs to be actioned ASAP. There is a SC meeting scheduled with Steve Davenport, Steve Brown on traffic regulations.

5. Hot topics

Local Economic Growth Strategies

Comments need to be fed into the strategies. This will be followed by a further period of consultation on the website.

Heritage Action Zones

Bid was submitted 12 July. HAZ Bid was based on much of the work that was done with the FHSF. It focuses on particular buildings and includes a proposal for a grant scheme.

Cambrian Gateway Opportunities

Viability of uses is being scoped out on the whole gateway approach including Morrisons / car parks / bus station / coach station site. Will be included in the masterplanning piece that is being commissioned. SC is aware of the opportunity.

6. Officer updates

Street Signing cleaning

There is concern that the list has not been completed according to the instructions sent by the BID. Adele to follow this up with Victoria *Doran** (addition to minutes) and, on receipt of the Works list, will share this with Arren.

Coach Friendly Status

David *Clough** (amended from Gradwell*) wants to promote Oswestry to tour operators through Coach Friendly Status. *BID have been chasing David Gradwell at SC to arranged for the signage to show the new coach bays in order to go for this status. At the moment, these signs are promised for October.** (addition to minutes)

HIF update

Looking to go out for consultation 3 – 4 weeks in advance of planning application. First site for the consultation boards will be at Mile End/Travelodge. Second site FOG suggested should be at the library. Joe to contact Matt Johnson with the suggestion

Wider consultation

It was noted that the messaging is key before any future public consultation exercise around master planning to pave the way regarding the change of the nature of town centre and how various options are being looked at. Agreed to develop a forward plan for the year with key messaging to inform future consultation activities and reporting back on FOG activities.

7. Communications Protocol and PR update

A communique referencing the HAZ, setting the scene regarding the repurposing of the town centres and ongoing survey work to be released.

8. Agreeing next steps

Action: Officers will work on a “What If?” scenario around one or two empty properties looking at various options and discuss with Public protection and feed back to the FOG meeting.

Action: Adele is to query when the high street survey report will be ready for circulation.

Action: Emma Chapman from the Growth Hub is to be approached by officers for insight around business enquiries and support for businesses in the Oswestry area. Feedback will be circulated to FOG.

Action: Traffic Survey is to be resent to Sandy by Adele.

Action: Adele will follow this up the street sign-cleaning list with Victoria Merrill and, on receipt of the Works list, will share this with Arren.

Action: Joe to contact Matt Johnson with the suggestion that the library is a good location for the second Consultation stand regarding Mile End improvements.

Action: A communique referencing the HAZ, setting the scene regarding shrinking retail/repurposing town centres to be released. Gareth to be contacted by Joe

Action: Chris Taylor is to be approached for some information regarding the internet/wifi connectivity in the town centre

Action: To discuss a formal piece of work that considers the correct restrictions (disabled parking / loading / signage etc)

9. Any other business

Query regarding the internet/wifi connectivity in the town. Coralee to check with Chris Taylor on any updates for Oswestry Town Centre.

Town Council has agreed to take on the streetlights and has asked for a contribution from Shropshire Council. It was noted that the replacement of lights behind Boots has been taken on by Jason Hughes.

10. Date of next meetings

12th of September 2pm, 10th of October 2pm, 7th of November 2pm, 5th of December 2pm