

Future Oswestry – 2nd of May 2019, 7pm
Oswestry Town Council, Council Chamber

Attendees:

Cllr Steve Charmley (Shropshire Council) Cllr Robert Macey (Shropshire Council),
Cllr Chris Schofield (Town Council) Cllr Sandy Best (Town Council and Mayor)
Adele Nightingale (BID) Ian Follington (BID) Arren Roberts (OTC)
Corrie Davies /Joe Bubb /Hayley Owen (Shropshire Council Economic Growth)

Apologies: David Preston

1. Welcome and introductions provided by Cllr Steve Charmley Chair outlining the agenda for discussion.

2. Re-cap of initial workshop held 26.3.19

Cllr Steve Charmley asked if there were any comments on the draft notes. There had been varied discussion around several key points including Oswestry 2020 Neighbourhood Plan, BID vision and objectives, Growth Corridor Shropshire Council work and Future High Streets Funding application. Joe noted that there had been ideas shared around refresh of the 2020 plan and more weighted 2050 document, broader than town centre aspirations, Future High Streets and Growth Corridor including Park Hall. The question was what the group wanted its main purpose to be and objectives.

3. Review and agree purpose and key objectives of Future Oswestry Group.

Cllr Sandy Best indicated that each of the three bodies have their own agendas and saw the opportunity of the group to bring integration and joint working around a shared purpose. Cllr Sandy Best was keen that plenty of consideration was given to this so that the group were clear on the way forward.

Cllr Steve Charmley noted that the Future High Street funding was a focus and if successful how that funding was then delivered and delegated.

Ian suggested it was important to agree physical boundaries of the work as their boundaries stretched to Park Hall and key growth corridor work and master planning would at Shropshire Council would also take on board the wider area. Cllr Sandy Best felt that their role was up to the A5. Arren added that they have a legal boundary and could not make decisions relating to neighbouring Parish Councils. Ian suggested a boundary that flexed to work on given projects. Joe suggested that additional task and finish, or specific projects where there was a need to include other partners could be looked at as and when. Corrie suggested that there had been an indication from Whittington in their interest specifically in Park Hall. Cllr Chris Schofield asked when the funding would be confirmed for Future High Streets and what the group would focus on until then. The Future High Street Funds should be announced in summer, however Hayley suggested there was a lot the group could do regardless of this funding. Ian indicated there are small things that can be done right now, regardless of the outcome of funding.

Arren suggested there were three key objectives 1) develop the long term vision and plan 2) Delivery of medium-term projects 3) local co-ordination of short-term improvements.

Cllr Robert Macey suggested that the partnership itself would enable the area to be ready and primed when other funding became available.

4/5 Developing an overarching vision and Drafting Terms of Reference

Cllr Steve Charmley asked for thoughts on this as a group. Arren suggested any recommendation made within the group would need to go back to the lead organisations for decisions. Cllr Chris Schofield raised discussion around Freedom of Information requests and asked about notes. Hayley asked if the group felt they needed full notes or action points in relation to this point. There would be a need for more detailed arrangements if the FHSF came into fruition. Funding would be allocated with the Local Authority but if there is delegation of funding and grants this would need to be looked at in more detail. Joe suggested that some areas might be specific to individual groups and would be discussed within those organisations. Any specific tweaks could be made to the TOR as the group developed. Hayley suggested they have templates that could be utilised and adapted to suit the group.

Cllr Chris Schofield asked about communications and one person being responsible for this publicity. Joe suggested that a communications protocol is put together, and the Chair would be spokesperson. Statements from each of the partners could be included within an press releases. Joe suggested that communications or joint messages could be agreed at the end of each meeting.

Notes with actions agreed for audit trail purposes. Declaration of Interests noted by Ian. Firstly, announcement of the group, its name and re-enforcing it is working together for the needs of the area. Adele asked about the name of the group and suggested Future Oswestry a good name for looking forward. The use of the web pages being developed at Shropshire Council could be used to promote the group.

Cllr Sandy Best noted it was important the group put the groundwork into what the group would be doing. Joe suggested the group could spend some more time on this at the next meeting taking a further look at Future High Streets Bid and other areas of key work.

Cllr Chris Schofield suggested it would be useful to have list of landlords with particular look at empty vacancies. Ian has some of this information. Hayley also noted the Evidence and Stats team due to do a piece of work on this for each market town which would timely to ensure baseline data. Ian suggested having this was data was important to understand how the town worked and how it can move forward.

Priorities and projects were discussed – picking up on previous discussions around Festival Square, bollards and lighting. Arren noted traffic regulations and parking enforcement, supported by Cllr Chris Schofield as areas of concern. Ian asked who owns the ‘welcome to Oswestry signs’ and whether any upgrading of these signs to re-energise and enhance creative feel of the town would be welcomed. It was suggested important to give room for immediate items but also not to lose site of the strategic projects. Cllr Robert Macey suggested that these were put into a list or table. Once this table has been prepared and prioritise, key officers could be invited to discuss specific topics at future meetings.

Joe highlighted the top objectives associated with the 2020 plan – the group felt three key areas linked to these including economy, environment and transport were key. Corrie indicated these were reflected in the FHSF and the Local Economic Growth Strategy which this group might want to support with overseeing.

Cllr Chris Schofield asked about the Business Chamber and their current role. Cllr Sandy Best highlighted the important role of independent businesses in the town and encouraging those who are working hard. Making the town look attractive, including encouraging living in the town with upper floor spaces is important. Sandy noted visits to other towns had balconies that had been decorated with flowers making it feel brighter and lifting the spaces. Ian noted it was important to pitch the town to businesses looking for their next step. Arren explained the market was a great starting point for businesses. Hayley highlighted pop up shop Planet Doughnut who had been able to test their offer in Shrewsbury.

6. Agreeing next steps

Action: Circulate Future High Streets key actions for next meeting – dedicate some time to look at the priority projects included.

Action: Combine list of current projects from organisations and documents (Os 2020, Place Plan, Oswestry Local Economic Growth Strategy, Public Realm) under the three key strands (Environment / Transport / Environment) for the group to then drill down and make an appropriate list with short, medium and long term.

Action: Circulate a draft outline TOR utilising Shrewsbury templates and partnership agreements.

Action: Ask Gareth Profit to put together a comms protocol and an agreed first press release for the group.

Action: set of dates to meet monthly starting week commencing the 3rd of June.

Action: Hayley to talk to Emma Smith re empty properties and Ian to share current information.

7. Date of next meetings

Suggested week commencing 3rd of June – to be confirmed.