

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19TH JUNE 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Holland-Delamere (Deputy Chair), Ashraf, Miah, Stevens

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr S Carter (Town Clerk), Mrs J Thorneycroft (Assistant Town Clerk), Miss Josephine Haines (Events and Project Officer) and Miss F Barford (Democratic Services Officer)

OTHERS PRESENT: Councillor Stevens, Mr Robert Saunders and Alex Millar (West Northamptonshire Council, Project Management Team)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted by Cllr Birch (Chair), Alwahabi, Hibbert, Ismail, Lane, Marriott and Russell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of a non-pecuniary interests was submitted by Cllr Hallam as a cabinet member of WNC Cabinet in item 3.

3. ABINGTON STREET PROJECT – PRESENTATION by Project Management Team (WNC)

Mr Saunders and Miller delivered the following presentation about the Abington and Fish Street Project:

- It was explained Mr Saunders overlooked the delivery of the Abington and Fish Street regeneration.
- Mr Saunders explained that Mr Millar was the Project Manager for the Abington and Fish Street development.
- It was stated a goal of the Abington and Fish Street development was to improve the public realm and hopefully reverse the reduction of footfall as people have moved to online retailers especially since the pandemic.
- In addition to making the Town Centre feel more functional, safe and inclusive space alongside the new residential developments at the former M&S/BHS and former Tesco Metro sites on Abington Street.
- The rationale behind the project was to improve and regenerate the two streets to entice business to open and develop more cohesion between the redeveloped Market Square.
- It was explained Gillespies was chosen as they had developed the plans for the Market Square and would enable synergy between the regenerated Market Square, Abington and Fish Street.
- Mr Millar explained the key challenges to the current state of Abington and Fish Street were; the lack people shopping of brick and mortar establishments, tired street furniture, uneven and poor-quality paving and lack of prominence of the sculptures.
- It was highlighted the pay-to-use public toilet would be removed due to its susceptibility to vandalism and downturn in use therefore, new public toilet solutions would be sought.
- As part of the plans there would be a open space near the entrance of the Grovesnor Centre to enable community events to take place.
- For the Fish Street redevelopment, the design would use trees and greenery alongside consistent paving utilising a wave-design throughout to entice people to wonder down with a light installation playing on the name Fish Street.

- For Abington Street, the design would feature activity alcoves that provide a variety of seating arrangements with greenery and play sculptures to entice people to sit and enjoy their surroundings.
- The DNA Sculpture honouring Francis Crick would be moved to a better suited location that enables it to be the centre piece of Abington Street.
- As part of the development of Abington Street subtle hostile vehicle mitigations would be put in place to prevent unauthorized vehicular thoroughfare.
- A consultation had been held and a presentation provided to businesses in the Northampton Business Improvement District to gain the views of local businesses and would continue to be sought throughout the development.
- The majority of feedback received from the public consultation focused on vacant units, lack of maintenance and littering however the Abington and Fish Street developments hope to address these issues.
- A costing exercise has been undertaken and the final amendments to the design were being made and it was hoped a developer would be procured in the near future.
- Whilst the regeneration of Abington and Fish Street is undertaken access to businesses would be a priority to enable customer to access the premises.
- It is hoped that the regeneration works would start in the late autumn of 2023 and would continue into the summer of 2024.
- In response to a question posed by a Councillor, Mr Saunders explained it was hoped the investment in the Town would be the seed sower and catalyst for the changes desired within the Town Centre.
- In response to another question posed by a Councillor, Mr Millar explained Gillespies would be advising on the appropriate planting as they were experienced and knowledgeable about sustainable planting and greenery. In addition, Mr Millar explained insect hotels could be incorporated within the scheme to enable them to thrive in the urban space.
- In response to a question posed by a Councillor, it was clarified there would be no play area in the development only seating that could be played on.
- In response to a question, it was explained the current lighting design for Fish Street was being reviewed and it was hoped to be modular and interchangeable through a device for example however, it is hoped it would complement the street scene.
- In response to a question posed by a Councillor, Mr Saunders stated that highways and some of the neglect would be reviewed as part of the project and a solution would be sought.
- In response to a question posed by the Assistant Town Clerk, Mr Saunders explained he would be happy to confirm the timelines of the redevelopment once a developer had been secured to enable the Town Council's planning of events and Christmas lighting.
- In response to a question, it was explained the nature of the hoardings would be dependent on the works being undertaken.
- In response to a question, Mr Saunders stated currently there were no plans at present for a cycle lane through Abington Street however, this would be investigated.

4. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 17TH APRIL 2023 AND ASK QUESTIONS AS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANY ITEMS

RESOLVED: The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

5. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES FROM THE GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15th June 2023 FOR CONSIDERATION AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Democratic Services Officer provided a summary of the recommended amendments to the Grants Policy to the members as outlined in Page 4 of the agenda. The Deputy Chair explained that the amendment to staffing costs had been made.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee held on 15th June 2023 be approved and adopted.

6. ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

The Town Clerk explained he wished to highlight Assets of Community Value which was now an option for Town and Parish Councils, the process is to initiate via the Unitary Authority who has to deem it against the principles of Assets of Community Value. He continued that Assets of Community Value enable the local community or community groups to deem an asset a Community Value and if the property was to be sold then they could place an offer to purchase it.

The Town Clerk had received a request for an Asset of Community Value for Open Stage on Whitworth Road. In response to a question, it was explained by the Town Clerk that if an asset is deemed a community asset then it can be considered as a material planning consideration. A Councillor stated there was a similar facility in the local vicinity. The Town Clerk explained one of the most common examples in more rural areas is a village pub or shop that was the only establishment of that nature in the area.

The report was noted and it was decided that it would not meet the criteria to be deemed an asset of community value and be deferred to planning for a comment.

DEFERRED: That the matter of Open Stage located on Whitworth Road be deferred to the Planning Committee for comment on the application.

NOTED

7. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND

The Town Clerk explained the eligibility for Community Ownership Fund has expanded to include Town and Parish Council and the purpose of the report was to highlight the option open for any assets at risk of closure.

NOTED

8. CORONATION CELEBRATIONS

The Assistant Town Clerk explained the Coronation Celebration went successfully and the Museum had received the highest visitors per day so far this calendar year. The Assistant Town Clerk explained she had noticed families that have attended to multiple of our events and taking note of our literature. She continued the Coronation Celebration was well received and provided great benefit to our partners.

The Assistant Town Clerk stated the Big Help Out went successfully and the large sustainable planters have now been installed and it was hoped more events could be held there to utilise the space.

NOTED

9. WINDRUSH

The Assistant Town Clerk explained the Mayoral Officer had completed a report to provide an update on the Windrush event scheduled to take place on Thursday 22nd June 2023. The report detailed the timings of the event and provided an update on the expenditure and the caterers.

NOTED

10. EVENTS AND PROJECTS UPDATE

The Assistant Town Clerk highlighted there would be a Northampton Town Council stall and requested any Councillors who wished to attend and contribute e-mail Mrs Hanam-Jones (Events and Projects Officer).

Furthermore, the Assistant Town Clerk requested Councillors attendance for the Balloon Festival as a Stall would be held over all three days of the event. The Events and Projects Officer explained the stall would be hosted in the Community Tent and would be from midday to 5/6pm in the evening however, confirmation would be sent to all Councillors.

In response to a question posed by a Councillor, it was explained the Diwali budget was agreed previously to a maximum of £10,000 and if Abington Street were to be closed then the parade would take place on The Derngate, Hazelwood Road and Giles Street.

The Assistant Town Clerk explained Heritage Open Day could not take place last year (2022) due to HM Queen Elizabeth I's passing and there was no budget spent however, it was hoped an event would occur with a budget of £2275.

AGREED: That £2,275 be provided from the General Events Budget for the Heritage Open Day event to take place on 17th September 2023.

The Event and Projects Officer explained the Pyro-musical display went down very well last year with the spectators and to secure a booking for Fireworks 2023 a 40% deposit be required and the remainder to be paid prior to 30th September 2023.

AGREED: That £8,400 could be paid to Fully Fused Fireworks (40% as a deposit of the £21,000).

The Events and Projects Officer explained a re-enactment of Northampton's Story of the Gunpowder plot and Guy Fawkes and would take place prior to the release of fireworks. Events and Projects Officer clarified we would have the adequate infrastructure in place to enable horseback re-enactment. A Councillor raised concerns that the horses could be startled by the fireworks and could pose a risk to spectators or re-enactors.

DEFERRED: That re-enactors of Northampton's Story of the Gunpowder plot for Fireworks 2023 be deferred to the next meeting once further information had been received regarding the timings and options.

AGREED: That the Town Council provide a contribution of £470.51 towards the Christmas Grotto that was in partnership with the Northampton Town Business Improvement District (BID).

NOTED

11. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

- **Cultural Compact Partnership** - *Request to postpone presentation to the next meeting.*

NOTED

MEETING CONCLUDED 19:35