

Dorset Council Grant for Market Area Enhancement

Working Group Meeting

Working Group Chairman: Cllr Colin Stevens

Tuesday 16th January 2024 at 10:30am
in the Community Room

NOTES

In Attendance

Cllr Colin Stevens

Cllr Hugo Miéville

Cllr Roger Carter

Cllr Sheila Chapman

Cllr Alan Cross

Cllr Noc Lacey-Clarke (arrived for summary)

Town Clerk

Operations Manager

Ross Ingham (online)

Kate Pinnock (online)

Cllr S Hitchings (online)

1. Apologies

Cllr Lynn Lindsay

Cllr Rosemary Holmes

2. To consider the formulation of a plan in response to the Dorset Council Proposal Report – Blandford Market Place Public Realm Enhancements

Councillors discussed the update that was provided at the council meeting on 18th December, which included the response from the DC officer regarding the timescales. He had confirmed that the funding must be used by the end of the financial year. Councillors considered the £70,000 and the possibility of using it to pay for the scheme if DC became unable to in the future, as it was agreed that it would not be possible to complete the project by then.

Councillors were enthused that DC appear to be supportive of a pedestrian area in the Market Place.

There was general concern over rushing the project and Kate advised that, in her experience with town centre enhancements that include the removal of parking, there are always a large number of disgruntled people.

The changes won't appeal to everyone, so it is better to take time to fully consult people and include it as part of the larger scheme with the Corn Exchange refurbishment. If we trial something prior to the refurbishment being complete, it will not be a true reflection of how it will work.

Linda advised that the staff would be in a better position to work on a plan during the Corn Exchange closure and it could possibly be managed between the Market Manager and the Bookings Receptionist.

Councillors agreed to work towards introducing the pedestrian area in conjunction with the reopening of the Corn Exchange.

Kate also suggested that the market area project could become part of the Corn Exchange project, with the architect considering the design and layout due to the significant design and layout of the Georgian Market Place.

Steve confirmed the agreement is for the funds to be spent by 2029.

Attendees discussed the trial period and the DC proposal suggests a trial period of six months, with possibility of extending it to 12 months and a further possibility of it being made permanent.

Trees were discussed, as well as them being placed in planters, which would need to be moveable.

Colin suggested that we request a power supply as part of the proposal, and water supply if possible.

3. To discuss next steps

It was agreed to open up dialogue with the DC officer and Ross offered to do this. He requires questions, so he knows which officers to approach for a meeting.

For inspiration, the Wimborne BID list of events can be viewed here:

<https://wimborne.info/upcoming-events/>

These notes will be circulated to attendees, followed by all Councillors and the public as part of the Town Council meeting scheduled for 29th January 2024. At the meeting held on 30th October 2023, Councillors accepted the proposal from Dorset Council and agreed in principle with the scheme. The recommendation is now as follows:

The Town Council agrees that part of the parking / market area is pedestrianised in the Market Place for an initial six month trial period. Due to timing, this will be linked to the completion of the regeneration of the Town Hall / Corn Exchange.

More discussion is required on what types of usage there will be but the following are put forward:

- Local groups/organisations/charities to promote themselves
- Food vans/pop-ups with seating
- Small events and performers (folk dancing, Stour Valley Band, buskers, etc.)

4. Any other business

There was a discussion about the general income loss for DC and it was agreed that most people do not pay for parking there because they use the spaces to pop into shops, and they will be able to park nearby in the Marsh & Ham, Church Lane or Tabernacle parking areas. Hence the loss of parking to DC should be minimal.

5. Date of next meeting

Linda will send a Doodle poll to arrange the next meeting.