

Dorset Council Grant for Market Area Enhancement

Working Group Meeting

Working Group Chairman: Cllr Colin Stevens

Monday 16th October 2023 at 5:15pm
in the Corn Exchange

NOTES

In Attendance

Cllr C Stevens

Cllr H Mieville

Cllr B Quayle

Cllr S Hitchings

Cllr H White

Cllr A Cross

1. Apologies

Cllr N Lacey-Clarke

2. To consider the Dorset Council Proposal Report – Blandford Market Place Public Realm Enhancements

At the start of the meeting, Cllr Carter suggested we accept the Dorset Council proposals. He raised the question of the bollards and said they aren't as aesthetically pleasing as planters, and they would need moving on and off. Cllr Carter also queried what amount of detail would be required for the plan DC requests. He suggested we could make a six-month plan, but it is difficult to provide a plan beyond that time at this stage, although an outline plan could be drafted. With it being a public realm enhancement space, it should be something that adapts to public usage and demand.

Cllr Cross indicated that he would prefer the proposed plan with planters instead of mainly bollards. He said we would need to come up with a really good plan of how we would use that area. Initially, it would be for the use of tables/chairs on an almost permanent basis except for market days. However, there is only one obvious cafe candidate for that purpose in the immediate vicinity so perhaps a pop-up café would match the area. Cllr Cross felt there should also be a wide range of activities arranged to make the best use of the area.

Cllr Lindsay raised the concern that the provision of tables/chairs would limit the area to a café zone for people to sit in so a programme of events should be planned for the area.

There also isn't anywhere to store the tables/chairs with the Corn Exchange work planned and one member of staff cannot move them in and out each day.

Cllr Mieville asked attendees if this is the plan Councillors originally envisaged. He also raised the point that the Corn Exchange will be closed with plant outside and contractors coming and going once the development work begins, which will impact on the timing.

Cllr Quayle said it would need to be in place prior to the elections as it is very likely it would not take place afterwards.

Cllr White said whichever party takes power of Dorset Council in May should proceed with the commitment should work have started. Cllr Quayle clarified that he could not guarantee it will be available next year.

Cllr Cross asked if it was agreed to proceed with this proposal how soon would it take for it to be confirmed. Cllr Quayle confirmed that it would be months as residents' views are required. Dorset Council is putting the proposal to the Town Council in the first instance. Cllr Quayle said if it is supported, he and Cllr Lacey-Clarke are happy to lead on the consultation for Dorset Council but this is not confirmed.

Cllr Quayle gave an example of the café area in Chippenham that the Town Council manages.

Cllr Lindsay suggested involving local groups and organisations in use of the space for taster sessions and promotion of what they do.

Cllr Lacey-Clarke suggested an informal survey to residents, but it is the plan Dorset Council wants to see to avoid it being left as an empty area. Cllr Carter suggested different ways of consulting with the public, including the businesses.

Cllr S Hitchings mentioned the event he manages and the possibility of payment for the space.

Cllr Lacey-Clarke suggested that the Town Council's plan for this scheme is

3. To discuss next steps and agree a recommendation to full council on 30th October 2023

Cllr Carter proposed that the Town Council accepts the proposal from Dorset Council and agrees in principle with the scheme. This was seconded by Cllr Mieville and agreed (10 in favour, 3 abstentions) that the recommendation is made to full council.

The proposed usage at this stage is for:

- Offering the opportunity to local organisations for self-promotion
- Events

4. Any other business

None

5. Date of next meeting

The Chairman asked if a meeting could be arranged in November with external groups who were previously involved.