

Dorset Council Grant for Market Area Enhancement

Working Group Meeting

Working Group Chairman: Cllr Colin Stevens

Friday 19th April 2024 at 11am
in the Pavilion, Woodhouse Gardens

NOTES

In Attendance

Cllr C Stevens	Cllr H Miéville	Cllr S Hitchings
Cllr S Chapman	Cllr R Holmes	Cllr R Carter
Cllr B Quayle	Dr Sylvia Hixson Andrews	Mickey Westwood
Nicci Brown	Andy Reynolds	Linda Scott-Giles

Colin thanked Mickey, Sylvia and Nicci for attending the meeting and updated them on the background of the project and Byron added the DC perspective.

1. Apologies

None

2. To consider any further ideas of what types of usage there will be in the Market Place

Sheila explained that the counter terrorism session attended yesterday raised awareness of the risks involved in such an open layout with vehicles.

Kate advised that the whole Market Place needs to be looked at holistically and that there are always going to be views in favour and against. This is going to be worked on during the Corn Exchange works with the aim of introducing the public realm area in conjunction with the new building. Kate and Ross suggested that the council should appoint someone who is experienced in designing public areas and to have a plan that can be phased, if necessary, even if the first phase is the DC proposal.

Roger raised concerns over funding for this purpose, due to the limited budget of £70,000 and asked if there is funding available. Kate suggested phasing the works and advised that funding is limited for highways works.

Byron said there must be over 60% (of respondents) public support for the scheme DC has put forward. The initial stage is to find out if residents are supportive of pedestrianisation.

Mickey asked that the residents are consulted on this matter alone.

Rosemary would like to see Church Lane bollarded off to restrict the roads leading into the Market Place.

With regards to the consultation, Kate advised that you can run the risk of putting ideas out there that are not deliverable. She suggested getting the design team in first and asking them to come up with options that we know could be delivered if there was funding.

Sylvia said it would need to include some kind of visual, and an explanation as to why this is being done. She suggested there are Sunday morning art sales, for example, and agreed that a designer would bring options to the table. Sylvia made the point – with regards to the loss of parking spaces – that there are always parking spaces available at Langton Road car park.

Sheila agreed with Kate's suggestion for a design plan and Roger spoke about ways in which we can increase the footfall and enhance the beauty of the Georgian space in the town centre. He referred to the Carter Jonas study, which taught us that the majority of residents in the north of the town don't come down into the town centre at all.

Hugo summarised the need to focus on the way forward, which will now incorporate a designer.

Sylvia suggested bringing the public along over a period of time and put forward the idea of projection onto the Town Hall façade.

Mickey asked how Byron thought DC would respond to use of all 16 parking spaces.

Kate offered caution over full pedestrianisation.

3. To consider the wording of questions and the timing of consultation with the public

The Town Council will carry out a consultation, with clear concise questions only focussing on this project, and for consideration at the council meeting on Monday evening.

4. To discuss next steps

To consider the appointment of a designer at Monday's council meeting. Kate has offered to sketch out a timeline and Ross will put forward suitable designers for consideration.

5. Any other business

Sylvia asked about distribution of the consultation and suggested various ways of reaching as many people as possible.

6. Date of next meeting

A poll will be distributed in due course.

Post Meeting Note:

Meeting with Consultant

After the working group meeting, and subsequent full council meeting, a brief Teams meeting was held on 15th May 2024 with the consultant IPA recommended – John Emslie from Urban Flow. He provided the example overleaf in Harleston that he had worked on and explained that it was originally in place for Covid distancing and then became permanent because residents embraced it so much.

John felt that the layout would work much better being symmetrical with the Town Hall, so that it is the focal point in the centre, and we can then make better use of the area (a point that Kate had also made). Because we cannot proceed to the Dorset Council without public support, he suggested we meet again once we have the consultation responses.



Consultation

The public consultation was agreed by full council and was first published in the Around Blandford publication in the June edition. There was an error on the front, which stated it was a Corn Exchange publication, but the inner page was correct.

The poster was added to the Town Council Notice boards in June.

The April/May Newsletter that went to all properties informed residents that a consultation was imminent. The next Newsletter has been printed and will be distributed by Royal Mail to every property during w/c 8th and 15th July 2024.

The Market Manager visited the shops in the Market Place on 21st June 2024, carrying out face to face consultation to ensure we receive a response from them and can then fully consider their views.

The social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter – will publish the consultation on Monday 24th June 2024. Attempts will be made to turn the comments off and encourage response on the consultation form instead.

The deadline for responses is 31st August 2024, allowing ample time for residents and businesses to consider the proposals and respond.