

EVESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the **TOWN PLAN COMMITTEE** held at 6.30pm on **MONDAY 1 MARCH 2021** via the Zoom video conferencing platform and in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Those present:

Chairman: Cllr J Tucker
Vice-Chairman: Cllr M S Goodge
Cllr Mrs S Amor (Town Mayor), Cllr A P Booth, Cllr A Dyke,
Cllr R Hale

Non councillor co-opted committee members:

Mrs G Pawson, Mr B Taylor, Mr R Walker

Officers: Mr S D Carter (Town Clerk)
Mr S Riley (WDC Inward Investment Manager)

14. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllr Clifford who was attending a briefing on the SWDP.

15. Declarations of pecuniary or other interest including requests for dispensation (if any)

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Minutes of the previous meeting held 16 November 2020 including questions as to the progress of any items

The Town Clerk had circulated with the agenda the minutes of the previous meeting held 16 November 2020. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 be adopted as a true record.

In response to a question regarding Battleton Brook it was explained that after many delays, the Environment Agency (EA) had sent through their plans and tender document for the Council to use. A meeting was being organised with the officer from the EA and Natural Networks, and then we hoped to go out to get the quotes.

A question was also raised about Neighbourhood Plans. The Chairman hoped that Andrew Ford from WDC could attend a further meeting to clarify a few issues and what the impact of the new planning white paper would be on Neighbourhood Plans.

17. Financial statement

The Town Clerk had circulated with the agenda a report detailing on the Town Plan budgets. The committee was responsible for £6,000 used for Town Plan projects and £5,000 which had been allocated for investigating the feasibility of a Neighbourhood Plan.

It was explained that £3,770 had been allocated from the budget for the Enlighten Evesham design proposal.

£1,500 was allocated for the Battleton Brook project. The Chairman asked the committee whether they would support a request to the Council that this money is earmarked. We were approaching the end of the financial year and this money would not be spent in this financial year

due to delays getting the plans from the EA. The Committee supported this and it was **RECOMMENDED** that, subject to Council approval, the £1,500 go into earmarked reserves for expenditure in the new financial year rather than going into general reserves.

It was noted that in the 2021/22 budget the £5,000 had been removed. There had been no spend in the current year and the £5,000 would go into general reserves. However, the Council had agreed that they would consider a request to spend from reserves if plans for Neighbourhood Plan were forthcoming.

NOTED

18. Inward Investment Manager's Report

Circulated with the agenda was a report from Shawn Riley the Inward Investment Manager at Wychavon District Council. Mr Riley was on hand to present his report.

Mr Riley explained that WDC had reluctantly decided not to promote the Blossom Trail this year as they did not want to be seen as encouraging people out of their homes at a time when there were restrictions. It was hoped that the asparagus season would be able to flourish as restrictions started to be eased from 23 April.

Construction of ten new starter units at Vale Park were progressing and due to be completed by the end of April. Interest in the units was high from both inside and outside Evesham. It highlighted the lack of comparable units in the region.

Moving onto the town centre prospectus, Mr Riley reported that the public engagement stage was near completion. Despite the pandemic responses had been comparable with similar studies done by the consultants when not in a pandemic. This gave them confidence in the results that they were getting. Key themes centred around history, traffic the river etcetera. Evesham was already at an advantage as it had the Town Plan. One point that had been highlighted is that Evesham needed to be more confident in it self and a bit bolder. It also highlighted that Evesham did many things but perhaps it needed to concrete efforts on doing less things but doing them better. Further information would be forthcoming once the report was published.

Moving onto the Public Hall and Riverside Shopping Centre, Mr Riley confirmed that WDC were investigating the possibility of repurposing the public hall into a new arts and heritage centre. WDC were working with Chase Commercial to develop the concept and had set aside £3.9 million should the proposal be found to be viable.

It was noted that the Evesham medieval market had been postponed by a couple of weeks and would now take place on 22-23 May, when lockdown restrictions would be easier.

It was noted that walking was something that was widely supported and promoted in Evesham. Cllr R Hale stated that he supported directional signs that linked with the villages outside Evesham giving details of how long it would take to walk to specific point within that neighbouring village. Cllr Hale also spoke about river swimming and how the local authorities need to be an enabler in getting the relevant grading to make river swimming another attraction. Mr Riley stated that he thought Avon Navigation trust would be the contact, though Cllr Hale believed that the process had to be led by WDC.

In response to a question, Mr Riley confirmed that he had no news on the future use of the Aldi superstore that was located in the town centre. It was due to close following the opening of a new Aldi out of the town centre. Mr Riley did not know who owned the building.

Cllr Dyke brought up the Treasure Trails app and had circulated the Evesham link prior to the meeting. <https://www.treasuretrails.co.uk/things-to-do/worcestershire/evesham>. It was agreed that this was worth looking at further and whether any co-promotion could take place.

In response to a question about rumours that Greggs and Iceland may be moving to the Range, Mr Riley stated that he had not heard this rumour, but nationally the Range had a relationship with Iceland and Greggs. Certainly, Greggs in the town centre was busy so it seemed unlikely that this would close especially as this was a growth market in town centres across the country. Mr Riley confirmed that the former Frankie and Bennies unit was to be divided into two.

In response to a question about the Market Place, Mr Riley confirmed that negotiations were ongoing with regards to a burger restaurant going into the former 'Unwined' premises.

Mr Riley was thanked for his report which was **NOTED**.

19. Story of Evesham at the Public Hall

Co-opted committee member Mr Bruce Taylor introduced this item going through the proposal for the 'Story of Evesham' attraction that if all went to plan would be located in the cellar of the Public Hall. Circulated with the agenda was the proposal for information.

Mr Taylor explained that they had been working on this proposal for over a year and had set up a private venture to deliver it. The project was led by Mick Hurst at Areca Design who was an expert in digital design.

The proposal aimed to deliver an interactive virtual reality (VR) experience that told the story of Evesham. For example you would be on the banks of the Avon when Eof saw his vision, then you would see the building of the Abbey, and then fight Simon De Montfort at the Battle of Evesham.

There was a 5-year plan and this plan calculated that by year 5 there would be 150,000 visitors to the attraction per year. The project team had spoken to people involved in other attractions such as Bannockburn and Jorvik and their plans had been well received and they had been given a great insight into how to run the attraction. Ultimately the aim was to present the story of Evesham at a national and international level.

The project did not want to work alone and were keen to involve the Town Council. It was highlighted that there could be ramifications for the Almonry, but a roaming ticket could be introduced that gave access to all the town centre attractions including the Almonry, and Abbey Garden.

Financially the project team were in negotiations with WDC about a loan. Mr Riley stated that nothing had been formally decided with regards to WDC providing a loan.

In reply to a question about the timetable, Mr Riley who was speaking on behalf of WDC confirmed that the planning application would have to be comprehensive and that this would not be a quick process. He also added that WDC's potential investment in this was to give confidence to the Riverside developer as their priority was the redevelopment of the Public Hall as an arts centre and of the Riverside Centre itself.

Cllr A Dyke stressed once again that there would be ramifications for Evesham Town Council and that as a council we needed to be involved as it progressed. He added that he had tried one of

the VR head sets and had a taste of what it would be like and he had been amazed. It would be very positive for the town centre.

Mr Taylor was thanked for his report.

20. Active Travel

Co-opted committee member Mr R Walker gave a presentation updating members on the active travel initiatives. Mr Walker had a PowerPoint presentation that he went through with the committee.

Mr Walker explained that a lot had been going on with active travel including the creation of a group called Active Evesham which aimed to make cycling and walking the first choice for short journeys in Evesham.

They had set out a number of actions which had been presented to WDC's Executive Board. These being:

In seeking to improve transport infrastructure in Evesham to enable safe cycling and walking into and within the town centre, we propose the following prioritised actions:

Short term priorities:

1. Complete the route connecting Evesham Town Centre to 'The Valley'
2. Construct the Hampton cycling and pedestrian bridge
3. Complete the riverside route from Workman Bridge to Briar Close
4. Complete the link between Waterside and The Link via Battleton Brook
5. Complete the NCN442 link from the Evesham United roundabout to Church Street

➤ Medium term priorities:

1. Provide a North-South cycleway from Evesham United to the Valley, through Town Centre
2. Provide safe crossing of the A46 Badsey Lane and link to Church Street to complete the NCN 442
3. Extension of 20 mph zone to include Evesham Town Centre and Bengeworth area

The group had stated that these improvements would help to provide the necessary connectivity to enable safe active travel in and around Evesham. This would enable a modal shift to cycling and walking that will reduce congestion, improve health and wellbeing, and create a more 'people friendly' environment for both locals and visitors to Evesham.

The aims of the group fitted in with many of the points made within the town plan, as they looked to get people out of their cars, reduce traffic, improve health and benefit the environment.

The Town Plan Committee were very supportive of the new group.

Mr Walker asked that the committee give the group £700 to help promote their work. In response to a question Mr Walker said the money would be spent on PR, leafleting, graphics, generally getting the Active Evesham message out to the town.

It was proposed, seconded and **RECOMMENDED** that Active Evesham be given £700 from the Town Plan budget for this purpose.

Mr Walker was thanked for his report.

21. Matters of urgency raised, for information only, at the discretion of the Chairman

There was nothing brought up under this item.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.07pm

COUNCILLOR MRS J TUCKER
CHAIRMAN