

## **Notes of the Town Centre Working Group held in the Committee Room at Mountfield and virtually via Zoom on Thursday 10 March 2022 at 5pm**

### **Present:**

Present: Cllr Sarah Williams (Bridport Town Council, Chair), Cllr Julian Jones (Bridport Town Council), Cllr Ian Bark (Plastic Free Bridport and Mayor of Bridport), Cllr Kelvin Clayton (representing youth), Colin Divall (WATAG), Debbie Bond (Bridport Business Chamber), Paul Everall (BANP Steering Group), Nick Good (Federation of Small Businesses), Bridget Long (business consultant), Roy Gregory (Totally Locally), Antonia Squires (Totally Locally), Daryl Chambers (Town Surveyor), Terri Foxwell (TIC Manager), David Dixon (Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer) and Will Austin (Town Clerk).

### **1. Introductions**

Members introduced themselves and the organisations they represented.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Robert Mühl (Bridport Business Chamber), James Cox (Pub Watch), and Debra Bates (Dementia Friendly Bridport).

### **3. Declarations of Interest (Town Councillors)**

No personal or disclosable pecuniary interests were declared by Town Council members.

### **4. Notes of the last meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021 were confirmed as correct. Responding to Cllr Julian Jones, the Town Clerk advised he would report under item 6 on organisation from whom feedback was sought on the Access & Movement Study.

### **5. Town Centre Health Check 2021**

The Project Manager & Community Initiatives Officer presented on the analysis and findings from the latest health check, with data collected between June and October 2021.

Members discussed the health check, including:

- The need to gather data beyond that collected for the health check, such as the value of transactions and where people came from;
- Improvements to signage. The Project Manager & Community Initiatives Officer summarised actions to engage Dorset Council and National Highways in this issue;

\*\*\*Cllr Sarah Williams left the meeting at this point (5.45pm) and the Town Clerk assumed the chair\*\*\*

- The importance of the proposed Streetscape & Heritage Interpretation Study, and actions arising from it;
- The reliability of data collected in 2021 given the impact of varying Covid-19 restrictions;
- Concerns about the impact of car park machine problems and messaging about car parking, in December 2021;
- A need for joined up thinking on parking and wider strategy;
- The shortage of public transport options locally;

- The opportunity to pursue small changes as well as larger strategic changes to the town centre;
- The potential benefits of park and ride, and park and stride;
- A need to focus on increasing the popularity of non-market days;
- Town centre 'draws' beyond the retail offer;
- The role of business in encouraging local spend;
- The potential for empty shops to be used by artists; and
- Palmers Brewery Car Park as a possible parking option at weekends, with the owner's consent.

## **6. Project updates**

- Access & Movement Study. An update was provided by the Project Manager & Community Initiatives Officer and Town Clerk, including engagement with Dorset Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership. Members considered individual aspects that could be pursued, and highlighted a 20mph speed limit in particular. The Town Clerk advised that the following had been engaged in the Study: Dorset Council, the LEP, the local MP, Foundry Lea developers, Bridport Business Chamber, WATAG, schools, representatives of people with disabilities, retailers, and St Michael's Trading Estate. This was not an exhaustive list, and the matter had been covered in the press and discussed at Council and Town Centre Working Group meetings.
- Centre of Bridport Streetscape and Heritage Interpretation Brief. The Project Manager & Community Initiatives Officer provided an update on development of the brief, which aimed to review the functionality of the current streetscape/public realm and audit heritage interpretation. Members discussed the brief, and highlighted concerns about the cost of this work.
- Bridport Bus Station. The Town Surveyor provided an update on the development of a feasibility study for the redevelopment of the Bus Station, which had engaged consultants and Dorset Council, who had co-funded the work. Initial options were expected shortly, and the consultants would present these at a Council meeting.

## **7. Other items for information**

Following on from the earlier discussions, it was

RECOMMENDED: that a Task and Finish Group be established to develop actions arising from the meeting.

Members also highlighted the potential benefit of an informal meeting between business representatives and the Town Council. The Town Clerk advised he would pursue this.

Responding to a query, the Town Surveyor advised that regular repairs were carried out at Bridport Football Club Car Park.

## **8. Date(s) of Next Meeting(s)**

Following discussion it was

AGREED: that a further meeting be scheduled for approximately three months' time.

The Town Clerk thanked members for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 6.44pm.