

KING'S LYNN TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM & REPURPOSING WORKING GROUP

Meeting Minutes

Date 27 th April 2021	Location Via MS Teams
Time 9am	Chair Vicky Etheridge

Attendees	Apologies
<p>Vicky Etheridge – BID Manager (Business Improvement District)</p> <p>Jemma Curtis – Regeneration Programmes Manager BCKLWN</p> <p>Cllr Miss Lesley Bambridge – Ward Member</p> <p>Cllr Francis Bone – Ward Member</p> <p>Cllr Graham Middleton – Ward Member</p> <p>Jake Smith – Dukes Head Hotel General Manager</p> <p>Andy Lightfoot – Marks and Spencer's Store Manager</p> <p>Ian Cunliffe – Gin Saloon and 7th Heaven</p> <p>Nick Balaam – King's Lynn Preservation Trust</p> <p>Andrew Stevenson – Partner with Hawkins Ryan</p> <p>Anna Gunn – King's Lynn Civic Society</p> <p>Charlie Roughton – Co Founder Maze Group</p> <p>John Weston – Brown and Co, Commercial Property Agent</p> <p>Kathy Ennis – Business Mentor</p> <p>Helen Payne – Co-owner Soul Food Cafe</p>	<p>Rick Morrish – Civic Society</p> <p>Neil Gromett – Managing Director Alive West Norfolk</p> <p>Alistair Cox, Vancouver Centre Manager</p>

Minutes	Actions
<p>1. Introductions</p> <p>1.1 Introductions for the group were led by Vicky Etheridge and opportunity was given for all participants to introduce themselves and the organisation they are representing.</p>	
<p>2. Background to Town Investment Plan</p> <p>2.1 Jemma Curtis presented a PowerPoint which outlined the Town Investment Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Deal board formed in 2020 • Bid to the Government for £25 million funding • Council collaborated with stakeholders, college, Historic England etc. to take the vision for King's Lynn forward • Surveys and business engagement undertaken • Strengths and challenges identified • Recognised the Covid pandemic allows for changes to the Town Centre, the need to increase footfall, diversify the offer and better integrate the town centre with the riverfront • Bid was submitted to the Government in October 2020 but revised in February 2021 following the failed Future High Street Fund bid. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expected announcement on funding following the election in May 2021• Projects carried forward are dependent on level of funding offered by government• Subgroups have been set up to assist with developing the concept ideas – the Youth Forum, Skills working group, the St Georges Guildhall and Creative Hub community and stakeholders’ group and the King’s Lynn Town Centre Public Realm and Repurposing Working Group• A Public Realm Action Plan has been developed for King’s Lynn and proposes short term, medium term and longer-term aspirational projects• Provides a strong strategic case for further funding• Further immediate funding available includes the Welcome Back Fund which can be used for beautification and the Treescapes fund which is likely to be led by Norfolk County Council <p>2.2 Vicky Etheridge asked whether £25 Million was the cap on the fund. Jemma Curtis explained that King’s Lynn will not be in the ‘exceptional’ bracket and therefore £25 Million was the maximum.</p> <p>2.3 Cllr Lesley Bambridge asked whether funding included Norfolk Street. Jemma Curtis confirmed it would include Norfolk Street.</p> <p>2.4 Helen Payne asked, ‘Can any of these funds be used to entice independent businesses to take up vacant properties?’ and ‘Can any of these funds be used to reduce car parking fees? Jemma Curtis explained that car parking fees were not within this group’s remit.</p> <p>2.5 Cllr Lesley Bambridge asked ‘Are the ideas of the Regeneration and Development Panel being put forward?’ Jemma explained that the role of this group was an advisory one and that any projects would need to go through the Town Deal Board and the councils democratic process, including the R&D panel for final sign off.</p>	
<p>3. Role of the Group</p> <p>3.1 Vicky Etheridge explained the role of the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which of the programmes to be put forward will be prioritized• Once the projects have been agreed the group can add ideas and details• The group aspirations can help inform projects• Various lots of Government funding which can assist• Potential to lease buildings through the Community Renewal Fund• The group is an advisory group and therefore can be creative	

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<p>3.2 Jemma Curtis said that working groups are useful as they provide good contacts with a wealth of experience who can assist with facilitating projects. The Council's resources are limited so working together is vital.</p> <p>3.3 Nick Balaam stated that the King's Lynn Preservation Trust are able to access funding which the Council may not be able to, the funding is to restore buildings back into use which may be outside of the remit of Council funding. The King's Lynn Preservation Trust already have a number of buildings which have been looked at.</p> <p>3.4 Jemma Curtis replied that the Town Centre repurposing funding of £1.75 Million requested in the Town Investment Plan was not prescriptive and that three buildings have been set out to the Government which can be bought back into use. Jemma suggested that if the funding gets approved, the Council could collaborate with the Preservation Trust to look for joint buildings to work on. This may assist with independent companies into the buildings.</p> <p>3.5 Anna Gunn asked 'when you are talking about bringing buildings back into use, is there going to be some crossover with HAZ and High Street HAZ here? Or are they completely separate?' Jemma Curtis replied regarding the HAZ project for this year and the Historic England funding for it.</p>	
<p>4. Funding opportunities</p> <p>4.1 Vicky Etheridge explained the Community Renewal Fund which replaces the European Union Structural Fund and that it is funding for regions which are in need of development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilot fund to run for 1 year with the likelihood of having 6 months to spend• £500,000 to spend on skills, town centre repurposing and local communities• Pop-up shops are included• Fund can be used to secure the lease of buildings for small new businesses• Assistance may be required from group members to assist with offering support to new businesses in the pop-up shops <p>4.2 Vicky explained to the group that the BID is investigating the possibility of setting up a pop-up shop, however a suitable location was yet to be found. Conversations were being undertaken with Michael Baldwin to examine the possibility of running a hospitality training centre where users could learn all aspects of running and managing a restaurant from front of house to kitchens, however funding would be required.</p>	

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<p>4.3 Andy Lightfoot asked if there was a possibility of introducing a loyalty scheme which encourages local spending and retention of money within the local economy. Jemma Curtis said that it was something that the Welcome Back Fund could possibly be used for.</p> <p>4.4 Cllr Lesley Bambridge queried timescales for starting projects. Jemma Curtis explained that the Council have a small amount of funding for immediate spend on small scale projects, however after the Towns Fund has been determined the Council would have 2 months to determine a project and a year to submit a detailed business case. The group could assist in finalising which project would be moved forward on. She explained that there is a lot of potential funding which would need spending in a short period of time so having 'shovel ready' projects would help with the time constraints.</p>	
<p>5. Group Work Programme</p> <p>5.1 The night-time economy is discussed as it is known that the town centre goes quiet at 3-4pm.</p> <p>5.2 Ian Cunliffe stated that years ago the town was busy on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday night , however this has reduced until Saturdays only and people don't come into town until 10pm or later, he suggested that restaurants and public houses opening earlier in the evening might increase footfall and mentioned that Norfolk Street doesn't have any customers until at least 10:30pm. Cllr Francis Bone asked whether this was caused by opening licences running later into the early hours and if the closing times were bought forward whether that would encourage higher footfall in the evening. Ian advised that couldn't happen as the younger people want to be out later.</p> <p>5.3 Cllr Graham Middleton suggested that there was 'no one-touch solution' and there was a need for an overall plan for the town which should include availability for families in the afternoon with a family centric 'vibe' in the early evening which may feed into the night-time economy. He suggested that King's Lynn town centre needs to be adapted over the next 5-10 years so that it doesn't only offer retail units. He suggested that empty units should be filled with offer that people 'need' to go to so that smaller companies would be encouraged to open around them.</p> <p>5.4 Helen Payne agreed that encouraging people into the town for leisure purposes would also encourage them to shop.</p> <p>5.5 Jemma Curtis confirmed that Neil Grommet from Alive West Norfolk had been invited to this and future meetings and may have some ideas which could be carried forward.</p>	

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<p>5.6 John Weston mentioned that the lack of uptake on the empty premises was not due to a lack of exposure and all of the national portals for property let/sales were utilized. He mentioned that great interest has been shown in the empty Debenhams store for leisure at ground floor and retail at first floor. He also stated that businesses still need to be commercially viable to consider opening. Vicky Etheridge stated that indoor markets were a concept that had been offered previously and that they need to start small and transfer into larger premises when they grow and that they would need repeat business to allow them to grow.</p> <p>5.7 Andy Lightfoot suggested that later opening may be required but all retailers in the area would need to agree to later opening hours and if enough agreed it could be trialed. This could blend the afternoon trade into the evening but would need to be a collective. If targeted for the height of Summer on a Friday or Saturday, with good promotion it could be undertaken as a special event. Vicky Etheridge discussed a similar scheme run in Norwich which was successful.</p>	
<p>6. Questions</p> <p>6.1 Cllr Lesley Bambridge asked 'Can a grant system be part of any of the funding to help take up the use of the empty buildings?' Jemma Curtis explained the new 'Refresh Reopen Grant' which is for use in the hospitality and leisure industries, she mentioned that ICT were currently working on an online application that existing businesses could access. The grant is £500,000 and existing businesses could apply for 75% of costs up to £10,000 to cover costs, this would include works to shop frontages. Money from this fund would need to be spent by 1st August 2020. Vicky Etheridge asked whether it would include creative use of planters to help with social distancing for businesses and Jemma confirmed that this would be considered.</p> <p>6.2 Cllr Francis Bone asked if the extended licensing for outdoor seating would continue, Jemma Curtis was unaware of whether the regulations would be extended but work with NCC would continue. Cllr Graham Middleton mentioned that the Council were currently being relaxed in it's approach to outdoor seating, however this would need to be tightened up in future. It was recognised by the group that some of the outdoor seating looked 'shabby' and Vicky Etheridge acknowledged that businesses haven't necessarily has the funds to be able to purchase new seating items. The outdoor café culture was seen positively.</p>	
<p>7. Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nighttime economy, extending from the daytime	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pop-up shops• Beautification of the Town Centre – Outdoor seating etc <p>7.1 Veronica Sekules stated that there was a need to 'green' the town and that she had been collaborating with 'Bug Life' for information on 'bug friendly' planting. Jemma Curtis mentioned the possibility of inviting the Council's tree officer to a future meeting and the Tree Fund which might be utilised.</p> <p>7.2 It was agreed to hold monthly meetings.</p> <p>7.3 Vicky Etheridge directed group members to the Terms of Reference, stating that anything that may be confidential will be stated as so, that it was necessary for group members to declare if they had an interest in a particular topic and that the group should be respectful of each other at all times.</p> <p>7.4 It was agreed that if somebody had a good idea and a guest speaker, they would be more than welcome to present to the group.</p> <p>7.5 Anna Gunn enquired regarding the Graeme Massie Public Realm action plan and whether it had been adopted, Jemma Curtis replied that the Public Realm Action Plan would be taken to cabinet at the same time as the Town Deal. Vicky Etheridge stated that the public realm and the town repurposing were interlinked, both reliant on funding and that the two need to work together. The night-time economy for example had an impact on the public realm and how people use the space.</p> <p>7.6 Vicky Etheridge asked if it was necessary to have discussions between meeting and Jemma Curtis explained that if funding became available, it may be necessary to have smaller meetings.</p> <p>7.7 Vicky Etheridge thanked members for their contributions and enthusiasm.</p>	
<p>8. Date of next meeting 27th May 2021 at 09:30-12pm via MS Teams</p>	