

ED/01/19

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economic Development Working Group** of Buckingham Town Council held on Tuesday 26th May at 2pm online via Zoom.

Present:

Cllr. J. Harvey	Vice Chairman
Cllr. H. Mordue	
Cllr. M. Smith	Chairman
L. Hutton	#lovebuckingham
D. Jones	University of Buckingham
M. Simons	Traders Association
Cllr. C. Clare	BC
N. Morrison	Buckingham Society
P. Hodson	Town Clerk
C. Molyneux	Deputy Town Clerk
E. Churchill	Tourist Information Centre
	L. Stubbs
Communications Clerk	
N. Stockill	Committee Clerk

50/20 Election of Chairman

Proposed by Cllr. Harvey, seconded by Cllr. Mordue and unanimously **AGREED** to appoint Cllr. Smith to the position of Chairman for 2020/2021.

51/20 Election of Vice Chairman

Proposed by Cllr. Smith seconded by Cllr. Mordue and unanimously **AGREED** to appoint Cllr. Harvey to the position of Vice Chairman for 2020/2021.

52/20 Apologies for Absence

Members received and **AGREED** apologies from Cllrs. Whyte and Newell.

53/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

54/20 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the Economic Development Working Group meeting held on Wednesday 12th February 2020 were **AGREED**.

55/20 Action List

Inter-Town Steps Challenge (758/19) – Cllr. Harvey said that given the current climate it was unlikely that the Inter-Town Steps Challenge could be progressed until the Summer of 2021. Members acknowledged that, on the whole, the town's population were spending more time walking and exercising in local parks. Cllr. Smith said there should be a minimum of three local towns willing to participant in the challenge before it is progressed any further. Cllr. Harvey confirmed that Brackley were not interested.

Members **AGREED** to invite Diane Fawcett to the next meeting of the Economic Development working Group.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

56/20 Managing the Town's reopening

53.1/20 To receive verbal updates from all

Members discussed a report, circulated in advance, from Cllr. Harvey and noted the following idea that emerged from conversations on social media:

- Perhaps there is something we can do to help retail tenants work collectively with their landlords to reduce the rent for the next few months / make lettings available at reduced cost initially
- Could the TC make the information more easily available about reductions in business rates that the Chancellor had put in place?
- Is there action we can take to foster a local Chamber of Commerce to encourage not only customers but B2B trade to be done locally and boost the local economy? Are there procurement changes that we and other authorities might adopt to help boost the local economy?
- Perhaps a moratorium on car park charges for the foreseeable future
- Could the TC help set up a voucher scheme or even a local bartering / Buckingham 'Bolivar' or 'Baht' (not many currencies begin with B!) - such as were once popular (eg Stroud Pound: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stroud_pound)

M. Simons said that many local traders were keen to see what ideas were available before commenting on any initiatives. L. Hutton said that many local business owners would appreciate guidance from the Town Council on what they could or should be doing to attract more foot-fall to the town centre whilst still adhering to the government's guidance. Shop owners wanted more communication on what the Town Council would be doing in the town centre and whether there are realistic plans for a one-way system. Cllr Smith reminded the meeting that responsibility for this lie mainly with Buckinghamshire Council. L. Hutton said it could be useful to promote the social distancing policies being employed by local shops.

Members discussed the merits of suspending the 50p parking charge in Cornwalls Meadow carpark until December 2020 in order to support trade in the town centre. L. Hutton spoke in support of a well positioned piece of PR to highlight some of the initiatives to re-open the town centre, similar to the success of Swanbourne's Betsy Wynne. She stressed the importance of understanding and responding to the town's mixed responses to the relaxation of lockdown measures.

Cllr. Smith said that any guidance from the Town Council must always be backed by Central Government's guidance.

Cllr. Mordue explained that AVDC had previously discussed the implementation of short term parking bays located by the recycling bins in Cornwalls Meadow but this had not been implemented.

D. Jones said the parking fees were not extortionate and a short-term ticket gave shoppers an incentive to leave the car park after 3 hours – thereby making room for more customers.

Cllr. Harvey suggested suspending the 3-hour parking fees until December 2020 whilst increasing the long-term parking fee. Members agreed that 3 hours was more than enough time to visit and shop in the town centre. Cllr. Smith stressed that social distancing guidance in shops and on pavements must be led by Buckinghamshire Council. Members held a discussion on the possibilities of pedestrianising the Bullring and Cattle Pens. M. Simons asked, on behalf of local traders, if it was possible to investigate options for levelling off the Bullring making the whole area suitable for outside dining. N. Morrison suggested a series of benches adjusted to the gradient of

the Bullring for the use by the local takeaways, cafes and restaurants. Cllr. Smith said it was something that could be considered but there were obvious cost implications to such proposals, including the need to ensure it was kept clear of used cups, plates and general rubbish. D. Jones said the Cattle Pens was an ideal location for an outdoor dining area.

Cllr. Clare said he could support the temporary suspension of short-term parking fees in Cornwall's Meadow car park as it was likely to lead to an increased foot-fall to the town centre. Cllr. Mordue said that either Buckingham Town Council or the Unitary Authority would need to take ownership of initiatives ensuring there were adequate recycling facilities available and that retailers were using sustainable/plastic-free takeaway containers.

M. Simons noted that previous road closures in the town centre had caused issues with deliveries to shops on Market Hill and this should be considered within any proposals, although Cllr Smith knew that other towns had restricted delivery times in such circumstances.

L. Hutton advocated the use of the Cattle Pens as previously events were visible to passing traffic. Members agreed that use of the Bullring should not inhibit the use of the parking bays opposite Jardine's Chemist.

Members AGREED for the Town Clerk to:

- Consult with local traders on the options discussed at EDWG
- Liaise with Unitary officers on County wide economic development initiatives
- Liaise with Highways to seek an extension on the suspension of short-term parking fees in Cornwall's Meadow carpark and an update on cashless parking facilities
- Recommend the above suggestions to the next meeting of the Town Centre & Events Committee and feed back to the next EDWG meeting
- Issue a press release on the options and outcomes discussed at today's meeting.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

53.2/20 **Safer Public Spaces**

Members **AGREED** that the foregoing included many aspect of the Government's Safer Public Spaces report, and to refer it, and a report of the above discussion, to the Town Council Environment Committee for further discussion.

ACTION COMMITTEE CLERK

53.3/20 To consider any options for promoting and supporting Buckingham's businesses. Discussed within minute 56/20.

57/20 Buxplore

The Communications Clerk reported that the app was in its final stages of development and would be launched digitally on the 27th May, with additional routes being added over the summer. A press release, involving the Town Crier, was drafted and would also be issued by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. D. Jones suggested using the community slot of BBC3 Counties radio. Mr Morrison suggested approaching the producers of the Story of England to try and promote Buckingham's heritage as a TV

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programme. L. Hutton suggested a local documentary maker and recommended approaching social media groups MK Kids, Family Ticket and Days out with the Kids. L. Hutton said the Heritage app was a feel-good community story and even The One Show maybe interesting in running a story on its launch.

58/20 TIC Website Update

The Tourist Information Centre Supervisor said she was moving forward with developments to the website and hoped to have it up and running for the reopening of the Tourist Information Office. Members noted the report and **AGREED** she contact local attractions and business for help with content for the new website.

59/20 Chairman's Announcements

There were none.

60/20 Date of next meeting

1st July 2020

Meeting closed at: 15.23am

Signed.....

Date.....

