

ED/02/20

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economic Development Working Group** of Buckingham Town Council held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 online via Zoom.

**Present:**

Cllr. J. Harvey	Vice Chair
Cllr. H. Mordue	Buckingham Town Council
Cllr. M. Smith	Chair
D. Jones	Buckingham University
Cllr. Newell	Buckingham Town Council
M. Simons	Traders Association
Cllr. W. Whyte	Buckinghamshire Council
P. Hodson	Town Clerk
E. Churchill	Tourist Information Centre
Louise Stubbs	Communications Clerk
Jo Watson	Dandylions Boutique
Diana Fawcett	Buckinghamshire Council

*No members of the public attended and so there was no public session.*

**375/20 Apologies for Absence**

Members received and accepted apologies from L. Hutton, and Cllr. Stuchbury.

**376/20 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. Smith declared an interest in agenda item 7 (A Story of Buckingham) as a Trustee of the Old Goal Museum.

**377/20 Minutes of last meeting**

Members approved the minutes of the Economic Development Working Group meeting held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020, received at the **Full Council** meeting on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

**378/20 Action List**

The Chairman welcomed Jo Watson, proprietor of Dandylions Boutique to her first meeting of EDWG.

BART Bus to Old Gaol (151/19) – Cllr. Whyte reported that the new minibus would be operational from October 2020 and discussions were being held on how it could be eased in to the local economy within a Covid-safe environment. Cllr. Smith confirmed that visitors to the Old Goal, displaying a valid BART ticket, would receive a £1 discount on their entry. M. Simmons suggested traders could participate in small scale Christmas promotions, alongside the BART Bus.

*D. Jones joined the meeting at this point in the agenda.*

**379/20 Aylesbury Town Centre Regeneration**

Members received a presentation on the role and work of the Aylesbury Town Centre Regeneration Manager, Diana Fawcett (attached in Appendix A).

Members asked the following questions and D. Fawcett's responses are highlighted in

italics:

Cllr Harvey - What's the budget for all these town centre initiatives? *Most of the initiatives are resourced through officers' time and effort. There is a small events budget, which the team use creatively to ensure a full programme of events. Most of our events move towards being financially sustainable so we have a number of income streams and officers are all employed by Buckinghamshire Council.*

Who forms the partnership? *I head up a team of four, including two part-time Administrators and an Events Officer. The Leadership Recovery Team has representatives from financial services, Town Council, food & beverage industry, leisure and retail sectors, police, Community Board, Aylesbury Garden Town, Economic Development Team and Buckinghamshire Councillors.*

Bunting – *The bunting has been a popular a festive addition to the town centre. It was repurposed from previous events such as the Queen's Jubilee and the London Olympics.*

Increased rents of town centre retail space - *We set up a landlord task force to look at the issue of increased rents and to help attract tenants into the town. Clearly, the pandemic has stabilised rents for the short-term but many tenant needs assistance on how to negotiate their rental agreements.*

*Nigel Morrison joined the meeting at this point in the agenda.*

What has been your key learning from your experience, post-lock down? *Not to underestimate how much support businesses have needed as they emerge from lockdown. They need allies and advocates through these uncertain times. It is crucial to act responsibly and not take any action that might risk spreading the virus but do so in way that helps reduce people's anxieties around Coronavirus.*

D. Jones asked if it was better to have more business representatives at forums such as Buckingham's EDWG? *The Leadership Recovery Team works effectively but needed to evolve. Each of the current sectors will bring provide regular updates and then set short term projects from the themes coming out of each sector's update.*

Cllr. Whyte asked Diana to clarify what level of voluntary contributions were paid by local businesses. *The majority of contributions have come from smaller businesses (£30 each) looking for a support network. The larger commercial retailers have contributed £3,000 each, but also benefit from their existing network of stores. In the future, there will be more sponsorship opportunities for street entertainment and market events. It's hoped this will help the initiative become sustainable and less reliant on contributions from businesses.*

The Town Clerk asked what the role of Street Wardens would be. Diana explained that the Street Wardens *had powers of enforcement but needed to become a visible positive presence in the town centre. Normally, Street Wardens would sit within Community Safety but it makes sense in Aylesbury for them to sit within a Town Centre environment.*

Members thanked Diana for addressing the group and sharing her experiences.  
*Cllrs. Whyte and Mordue declared an interest in the following agenda item.*

**380/20 Motion – Cllr. J. Harvey**

*“This Working Group is disturbed by increasing evidence of disruption to local businesses on the industrial estate next to the Recycling Centre caused by queuing for the latter. It is our view that current plans (to install a webcam to alert visitors to the existence of long queues) will not solve the problem. It is our view that a booking system, as used by MK Council, would be far better at balancing the needs of local business people and those who wish to use the recycling centre. We call upon the Buckinghamshire Council to install such a system.”*

Cllr. Harvey spoke to the above motion, highlighting that the issue had worsened and had become damaging to businesses as customer were unable to access their units. Cllr. Harvey explained that, following communications from Buckinghamshire Council’s Waste department, it appeared as though the installation of a webcam was the favourable option. However, this was not evidence to support this decision and webcams were not the only implementable option. Cllr. Harvey went on to illustrate the success of Milton Keynes Council’s recycling sites after implementing a booking system. Cllr. Harvey called for the group to support the motion calling for Buckinghamshire Council to emulate the good practice example set by Milton Keynes Council.

Members discussed and **AGREED** the motion.

**681/20 A Story of Buckingham**

Members received and noted a report from Mr N. Morrison. Cllr Smith reported that it was against policy for The Old Goal to exhibit human remains.

**682/20 Buxplore**

Members receive a verbal update from the Communications Clerk noting an increase in the daily number of visitors to the app. The National Lottery Heritage Fund have been happy to extend until the project the end of March 2021 as it has not yet been possible to arrange an outdoor launch event. The Communications Clerk explained that work was ongoing to launch the app on Google Playstore.

**683/20 COVID-19 Update**

Members received and noted a brief update from the Town Clerk.

**684/20 TIC Website Update**

The Tourist Information Coordinator reported an increase of 1600 unique visitors to the website some, from countries as far away as Tanzania and Vietnam. The Tourist information Coordinator explained she would be visiting local businesses to promotion the website and encourage participation. D Jones reported that the University’s Marketing Department were impressed with the website and that it was helpful in promoting the town to potential students and their parents.

**685/20 Chairman’s Announcements**

There were none.

**ED/02/20**

**686/20      Date of next meeting**  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Meeting closed at: 20.30

**Signed.....**

**Date.....**

ED/02/20

Appendix A

<https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/D-Fawcett-Presentation.pdf>

24/09/2020 Economic Development Working Group

Ratified

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*EQUALITIES ACT 2010/CRIME AND DISORDER ACT, 1988: the decisions made during the course of the meeting were duly considered and it was decided that there were no resulting direct or indirect implications in respect of crime and disorder, racial equality or diversity.*

Initial.....