

# **NORTH WALSHAM HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of the meeting of the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone Working Party held on Monday, 25 November 2019 in the Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN at 2.30 pm**

**Committee** Ms V Gay  
**Members Present:** Mr R Kershaw  
Mr E Seward

**Members also attending:**

**Officers in Attendance:** Economic Growth Manager, The Project Enabler, The Head of Economic and Community Development and the Democratic Services Manager

## **20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

## **21 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **23 UPDATES & PROGRESS**

The Project Enabler referred Members to the Draft Programme Design document for the North Walsham High Street Heritage Action Zone. She explained that it hadn't been proof read yet. Cllr R Kershaw said that it was a very impressive piece of work. The Head of Economic and Community Growth said that the document had been submitted on time and feedback had been received within a week. This had been extremely positive. He said that there had been specific comments regarding Cedar House and the townscaping improvements. The final submission date was 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and he was confident that a revised, final document would be ready in time for the deadline. He added that he believed the Council would receive a sizeable amount from the fund, although it could be 10% lower than originally anticipated.

Cllr R Kershaw said that a good relationship had developed between the Project Enabler and the local community and it was to be commended. The Project Enabler replied that the Stakeholder Group had been very supportive of the project and they welcomed the community engagement aspect of the bid. She added that the response and feedback that she had received had helped to shape the project. Cllr V Gay said that she was pleased to see such a positive response. Cllr E Seward agreed, saying that the survey comments had been consistently positive – particularly regarding the Paston element of the project.

The Estates & Assets Strategy Manager informed Members that it was likely a meeting with JD Wetherspoon would take place on 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> December.

The Head of Economic and Community Development commented that Historic England were keen to see a viable plan for the future financial sustainability of Cedar House. Cllr Gay said that it was important to clarify that it should not remain empty. The Head of Economic and Community Development confirmed that this was key and that if there was no alternative then it should be disposed of. Cllr Kershaw said that the Council would sell Cedar House to JD Wetherspoon if conditions were in place. It would bring money into the town and ensure that the building was repaired as soon as possible. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that if it could not be sold then consideration should be given to including in the bid a project for its repair and conversion for community use. The Estates & Assets Strategy Manager added that all of the required works had been undertaken apart from the removal of portakabins.

Cllr Seward said that it would be helpful to have other quotes for the site before the meeting with JD Wetherspoon. The Estates & Assets Strategy Manager said that planning consents and building condition surveys would need to be factored in.

Cllr Kershaw asked whether the money allocated within the project bid for Cedar House could be repurposed. The Head of Economic and Community Development replied that there was an option for project variation. The Project Enabler added that purchase by JD Wetherspoon fitted the criteria for community use and regeneration. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that the money could be used as match funding for JD Wetherspoon but this was unlikely. The Project Enabler said that NNDC's commitment to undertaking the repair work on the property showed Historic England that the Council was committed to investing in the building's future.

Cllr Seward asked when Historic England would be making a decision on the funding application. The Project Enabler said it was likely to be late January 2020. She said that she put more into the final bid to demonstrate that the Council was committed to the future of the Cedar House site.

## **24. TOWN CENTRE WORKS**

The Head of Economic and Community Development said that he had met with Phil Morris (NCC Highways) and Matt Tracey. There had been no suggestion of any funding to implement any of the planned network strategies but it was possible that there could be available funds in 2021/2022. He added that they were keen to work with the Council and develop a joint scheme. They had been reluctant to commit but had provided a letter of comfort. Cllr Kershaw said that the letter supported the intention to commit and he was satisfied with that. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that they had wanted to know if there was a sustainable Plan B. The Project Enabler said that they had discussed making a cohesive re-stitching of the town centre. Cllr Seward said that he would speak to Matt Tracey in the new year and try and establish where the funding had gone.

Cllr Kershaw asked if there were any other considerations regarding Historic England. The Project Enabler said that the letter of comfort has reassured them. She added that it was important that the community engagement element was highlighted throughout the report. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that this had been possible thanks to the input and engagement of the local community.

Cllr Gay added that the Paston Footprints Project had been particularly supportive. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that this would help in developing the Arts Council bids for the cultural element of the project. He added that he was concerned that not many arts organisations were mentioned in the bid and it might be useful to form a cultural consortium. The Project Enabler said that input from the Arts and Design department at Paston College would help address the lack of arts groups through their cultural programme. Cllr Gay added that Sheringham Little Theatre may be able to assist. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that NNDC could also sponsor an arts award.

The Project Enabler said these ideas would be reflected to fit in with the community and cultural aspects of the bid. She went on to say that the budget had been increased regarding the Project Officer role. The Economic Growth Manager said that the job description had been drafted and it would go through the job evaluation process in January 2020.

The Project Enabler referred to the building improvement scheme and said that Historic England would like to see a shift between years 2 and 3. The Head of Economic and Community Development explained that a 40% match was suggested to target specific buildings.

The Project Enabler said that she had attended a meeting with stakeholders and a series of FAQs or set responses would be developed to show consistency and to share messaging. She added that the market stall would continue to promote awareness and to keep communication channels open.

## **25. DESIGN DOCUMENTS**

The Project Enabler referred to page 9 of the Programme design document. She said that was indicative and it was intended to include an extra page or two about the market place. The Economic Growth Manager said that he felt it sold the project well. Cllr Gay agreed, saying that there was a dual narrative through the words and pictures. The Project Enabler confirmed that the document would be proof-read before submission.

The Chairman said that it was an excellent piece of work. Cllr Seward agreed, saying that it was a breath of fresh air to work with different people. Cllr Gay added that it was good to see a shift in attitude towards the town of North Walsham. The Chairman said that a communications strategy was crucial to the success of the project. The Head of Economic and Community Development agreed, saying that resource would need to be looked at for this.

Cllr Gay said that she was pleased to see the inclusion of positive comments. The Project Enabler said that these had been taken from the Local Plan.

The Economic Growth Manager informed Members that the Chamber of Trade had disbanded and re-formed as a business forum. The Head of Economic and Community Development said that hopefully this would result in renewed enthusiasm – Holt was a good example of this.

The meeting ended at 2.39 pm.

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Chairman