

**Notes of a Meeting of the
Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board
Thursday 11th October 2018 at 4.00 p.m.**

Present:

Board Members

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bennett, Clokie, Ovenden.

Non-Board Members

Cllrs. Barrett, Heyes

Chief Executive, Director of Place and Space, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Culture, Economic Development Manager, Communications and Marketing Manager, National Management Trainee, Member Services Manager (Operational).

Apologies

Cllrs. Bell, Galpin, Shorter

Item	Notes	Action
1.	<p>Notes of Previous Meeting – 19th July 2018</p> <p>Noted and agreed.</p>	
2.	<p>‘What the Public are Telling Us’ – Update on Consultation and the Stakeholder Event held on 2nd October 2018</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications gave a presentation outlining the feedback received so far during the consultation process. This had started on 23rd July and would continue until the end of October. The pre-cursor to this had been the residents survey over the Spring and the process had also included specific face to face events in the town and at events such as the Create Festival, along with the ongoing online consultations. This had all generated nearly 1300 comments and she ran through the headline feedback, grouped together under the four open-ended questions that had been asked: -</p>	

	<p><i>“How do we create a buzz about Ashford and make it stand out from the crowd?”;</i> <i>“How do we create a fun, thriving place in the daytime and at night?”;</i> <i>“How do we create a place that is accessible and welcoming to all?”;</i> and <i>“How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?”.</i></p> <p>The Leader said that one of the key points coming through was the perception of crime and Ashford town centre not being a very safe place to be at night. This was interesting because Ashford’s crime rate was relatively low, but he considered this was more to do with a lack of things happening in the evening which made the town centre seem less vibrant and not particularly welcoming. He considered that the new developments coming forward would increase footfall in the town centre and begin to change that perception. He was also pleased that there was a recognition within the feedback that the Council was making efforts to improve things.</p> <p>A Member said that one of the main issues mentioned to him was a lack of available public transport in the evening. It appeared that Stagecoach’s ‘Little and Often’ bus service had changed and whilst that may not have resulted in a net reduction in service, there was again a perception that there had been and this was perhaps an issue that needed to be addressed through the Quality Bus Partnership.</p>	
3.	<p>Vicarage Field/Odeon Square – Presentation on Work by Ash Sakula Architects and Next Steps/Programme</p> <p>The Director of Place and Space gave a detailed presentation on the draft options available for the former Mecca Bingo Hall/Vicarage Lane car park site and initial design work undertaken by Ash Sakula Architects. The initial work had generated some extremely exciting results and a delivery timetable of March 2019 to Summer 2022 was being targeted.</p> <p>Board Members expressed their strong interest and excitement for the emerging proposals from Ash Sakula which, if pursued would of course be subject to a detailed design and planning application in due course. The concept of a town square and all that could be delivered around that was seen as a particular opportunity.</p> <p>In recognition of the recently received petition calling for the</p>	

	<p>former Mecca Bingo building to be converted into a theatre, the Director of Place and Space advised that Council had already commissioned work to look at opportunities for providing a new indoor multi-purpose performance space within the town and outcomes from that work would help guide future plans.</p> <p>With regard to the lower end of the High Street more generally, a Member mentioned the message coming through from the Town Centre consultation that people would like to see the cobbles removed. It was confirmed that this would be investigated further as part of the wider work in the area.</p>	
4.	<p>Resource Planning – In-Year and 2019/2020 Budget Setting</p> <p>The Director of Place and Space introduced the report and advised that a considerable amount of work had already been carried out since the Administration had set its focus on the Town Centre earlier in the year. As this had happened after the current budget was set, it had involved Officers working hard to redirect existing approved budgets and achieving more for less. They had now though reached a point where to sustain and scale up the momentum achieved, they would need to make a bid for two elements of additional funding as part of the 2019/20 budget. The next meeting of this Board would consider a prioritised list of projects, but it was accepted that ideas were generated very quickly and it would be useful to have an allocation of funds that would allow the flexibility to be able to respond at pace.</p> <p>The Board supported the request for additional revenue funding of £130,000 and a one off allocation of £150,000 to cover anticipated capital costs, as well as a proposal to allow the Member lead for the relevant theme to endorse the project spend and obtain sign-off for the spending from the Chairman of this Board. It was noted that these proposals were subject to Cabinet and Council approval as part of setting the 2019/20 budget.</p>	RA
5.	<p>Tackling the Walking Route Between the Stations and the Town Centre</p> <p>The Head of Environment and Land Management gave an update on this key element of the Impatience Team Work Stream. She advised that improved lighting in public areas was part of a wider review by KCC and this was a good news story. The issue of lighting and safety/security had been raised by residents and the important pedestrian/cycle</p>	

	<p>route from the Designer Outlet to the Town Centre, particularly at the underpass, had been an area of particular concern. She advised of the 'quick fixes' that had already been achieved in this area, including litter removal, tidying, vegetation clearance, tree pruning and border reductions.</p> <p>The project was a complicated one in that it involved a number of stakeholders and would need considerable partnership working. Land ownership and interest on the route included the Designer Outlet, HS1, Network Rail, Southeastern Rail, the Environment Agency and KCC along with ABC's own involvement. Project priorities were safety and security, accessibility, maintenance, information/wayfinding and aesthetics.</p> <p>She showed some slides and videos which gave examples of some of the longer term aspirations for the route. These included improving the underpass itself in terms of lighting and general maintenance and eventually making the route an attraction in its own right. Some examples of potential attractive lighting schemes were shown. Additional elements included improvements to the footbridge over the river, renewing the railing under the underpass and attention to the sub-structure of the underpass itself. Eventually it was hoped that the route could encompass some sort of theme and/or art trail.</p> <p>The Board was extremely supportive of the proposals and impressed with the work that had already been undertaken. Officers were asked to continue their work with stakeholders and draw up a project plan that could come back to a future meeting of this Board.</p>	TB
<p>6.</p>	<p>Update on Queen Marie Statue, Cinema Opening and Events Leading up to Christmas</p> <p>The Head of Culture advised that the unveiling of the Queen Marie statue would take place on Saturday 15th December at 12.30 with a delegation from the Romanian Royal Family and other dignitaries present. This would include speeches, anthems and a reception for invited guests. Work with the Romanian Cultural Institute continued over an exhibition related to Queen Marie to take place at the new Picturehouse Cinema.</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Property and Projects further advised that the official opening of the Elwick Place development would take place during the week prior (Saturday 8th December). This would include the opening of the cinema itself and the unveiling of the market gates and</p>	

	etchings project.	
7.	<p>Wrap-Up of Remaining Items from the Four Work Streams</p> <p>The National Management Trainee advised that the main points had already been covered during the meeting but he gave brief status updates on the following items: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and Cycling Routes (work with Sustrans) • The Kent Wool Growers Site • Heritage Trail for the Town Centre • The Coachworks Project • Dover Place • Newtown Works. 	
8.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Post Meeting Note:</p> <p>This will now take place on Thursday 6th December 2018 - 4pm, Council Chamber</p>	

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services
Tel: 01233 330349 Email: membersservices@ashford.gov.uk
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