

Present: Councillor Mrs P Phillips (Chair)
Councillor Ms K Gehrmann (Vice Chair)
Councillor Mrs J Bland
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor D Hinke
Councillor Ms L Meachin
Councillor D Nimmo-Smith
The Mayor, Councillor Mrs E Hodgkin (ex-officio)
Deputy Mayor, Councillor S Gawrysiak (ex-officio)

In attendance: Mr M Kennedy – Town Clerk
Mrs N Taylor – Committee Administrator / Minute Taker

Also Present: Mr P McConnell – Town Centre Manager
Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor D Silvester
3 Members of the Public
1 Member of the Press

89. **APOLOGIES**
None received.

90. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Declaration of interest received from Councillor Mrs J Bland – Pecuniary -
Item 5, Town Centre Manager- Shop Front Scheme – owner of a shop in Bell
Street.

91. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**
Miriam Luke – 9 Chiltern Close Informed the meeting that she was the new
Chair of the Henley Women's Regatta, and advised the meeting that she had
competed as a rower in Bled and would like to encourage this committee to
support the twinning as it is an amazing place. She voiced her support for the
Henley Women's Regatta which takes place on the weekend 21/23 June, and
stated that she is trying to engage the town on what the Regatta is about and
promote awareness in schools.

David Fielding-Smith – 4 Walton Avenue Voiced his support for the Bled
Twinning initiative, he considers there to be many benefits for the town and
encourages the Council to give its support. Mr Fielding-Smith informed the
meeting that he had spoken to many people about the twinning and had
received no negative or neutral comments, only supportive ones.

Councillor Martin Akehurst – Two Tree Hill Informed the meeting that
although previously reported to council, that the flats behind the bus stop on

the Reading Road (near the Tesco roundabout) are empty, one is now occupied, so the resident will need to be included in any consultation on the provision of a new bus shelter.

92. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Town and Community Committee held on 29 January 2013 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

The Chairman informed the Committee that Oxfordshire County Council had found some additional funding for cycle racks, and that an extra 3 sets would be installed in the Town before the end March.

93. TOWN CENTRE MANAGER - SHOP FRONT SCHEME

The Chairman welcomed Mr P McConnell to the meeting and invited him to the table.

Mr P McConnell gave the Committee the following verbal update on the Shop Front Improvement Grant Scheme that was originally presented to the FSM Committee.

Within the framework of the Economic Development Action Plan for Henley the overarching theme is "to improve town centre vitality through supporting business, enhancing infrastructure and improving the visitor experience."

A shop front improvement scheme helps to achieve all three of these goals. The purpose of our Henley scheme is to incentivise and assist shop owners and landlords to improve the façade of buildings & shop fronts in the most visible and most visited parts of the town, (which for the sake of simplicity I refer to as the High Street), but include Market Place, Market Place Mews, Bell Street, New Street, Hart Street, Duke Street, Friday Street and Reading Road.

Henley is some distance behind the curve in taking this kind of action in its economic development thinking.

In the SODC area, Thame has run a very successful scheme over the last 2 years, assisting over 20 shops to improve their facades. In Vale of the White Horse Wantage & Gove have run a similarly successful scheme.

Schemes have run in dozens of towns large and small across the country e.g. Kettering, Kensington & Chelsea, Hillingdon, Rotheram, Gloucester, Grimsby, Edinburgh, Carlisle, Skipton, Rushcliffe, Sunderland, Boston, Wandsworth, Worcester, Leicester, Maidstone, Market Harborough, Stratford-on-Avon, Pendle, Wellingborough, Barnsley, Southend, Hayes, Ealing, Wakefield, Salford etc.

The positive benefits of this are:

- a smart, presentable, attractive high street,
- Visitors and local shoppers are shown to linger longer and spend more in an attractive high street. Various papers by AMT, ATCM and UK BIDS refer to the benefits of a smart high street,

- first time visitors are more likely to return to an attractive high street,
- an improved built environment raises the image of the town amongst potential visitors (in the same way that winning a medal in Britain in Bloom does); helping to attract more to the town with all the benefits of increased spend in Henley businesses. It is also a benefit of course to residents and constituents,
- an improved shopping environment in turn is one of the elements that attracts increased businesses to the high street,
- SODC has already budgeted £5,000 to match-fund HTC's contribution to the Grant Fund and is therefore providing increased investment in the town,
- Henley Town Council would also benefit from positive news stories when the scheme is formally launched and regularly when grants are made.

In addition with Henley having so many buildings of historic interest and importance in the central shopping area the town has a civic responsibility to do its utmost in encouraging landlords and shop keepers to preserve and enhance their premises.

The proposed scheme has a simple process:

- A small committee is established; I suggest it comprises the chair of the planning committee Councillor D Hinke, an SODC planning officer (this will be Peter Brampton) and myself, the Town Centre Manager – to meet once a month.
- Shops or landlords apply for a grant from the fund up to a maximum of £2,000– they themselves have to contribute at least the same amount to the improvement work – we match fund 50% of the works up to a maximum of £2,000.
- The committee approves or disapproves.

By approving this scheme Henley will be seen to offer a tangible incentive and benefit to town centre businesses, which will work to enhance both residents and visitors shopping experience. The Town & District Councils will be positively supporting Henley's businesses, especially the independents; the life-blood and key attractor for the town as a destination – one of the objectives of my employment and of the Economic Development Action Plan – while generating positive news stories for the council and aligning us with modern councils offering innovative solutions for economic development.

The shop front improvement scheme would be open to all freehold owners and lease-holders with at least 5 years on their lease and tenants of premises with commercial shop-frontage facing the street within the town of Henley on Thames. Tenants must have the building owners' prior approval.

Commercial premises include:

- Shops – including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, launderettes, dry cleaners etc.
- Financial and professional services (eg accountants, estate agents)
- Restaurants, public houses, cafes and food takeaways
- Buildings that are being used to provide a community service.

Consideration should be given as to whether priority should be given to premises in Henley's main shopping streets; Market Place, Market Place Mews, Reading Road, Duke Street, Bell Street, New Street, Thameside, Riverside, Hart Street and Friday Street.

Application for first floor improvement grants would be considered from the lease-holders, tenants and freehold owners of offices and residential property located above shops and businesses in the central area of Henley; Market Place, Market Place Mews, Reading Road, Duke Street, Bell Street, New Street, Hart Street and Friday Street.

Applicants would be able to claim against the following costs:

- Planning pre-application advice
- Planning fees
- Photos, drawings, material samples or anything else required as part of the planning process
- Physical work necessary to deliver the improvement

The following work would be considered eligible for support:

- New shop fronts
- Repair and reinstatement of any part of a shop front fixture that is visible from the street
- Re-instatement of original architectural features e.g. ornamental masonry, stucco and other applied finishes or details, historically patterned woodwork, ornamental metalwork or other features of historic significance.
- Repainting of shop front in suitable colours (following the published guidelines for the Henley Conservation Area where applicable)
- Repair and reinstatement of guttering and downpipes to match historic materials
- Repainting or re-rendering prominent elevations in suitable heritage colours
- Repair of external stonework and brickwork and replacement of stonework or brickwork
- Re-pointing using traditional materials
- Pedestrian access improvements – to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act
- External signage (following the published guidelines for the Henley Conservation Area where applicable)
- Lighting

All work would be subject to the relevant permissions being secured

The scheme would not support:

- Works which have already been undertaken or any works which are started prior to a formal offer of grant funding being made.
- Structural repairs including re-roofing
- Internal repairs and alterations
- Internal and external shutters and other security devices (e.g. CCTV)
- Recoverable VAT

Most alterations to shop-fronts within Henley would require permission under the Planning Acts, Advertisement regulations or both.

Planning permission will be required for works that involve a material change to the external appearance of a shop. Such works include alterations to the fascia, the windows or the doorway, changes to the materials used or the installation of blinds or security shutters.

The complete or partial demolition of an unlisted building within a conservation area will require conservation area consent. This includes the removal of features which give the shop front character, such as stallrisers, fascias or window frames. A large part of Henley's Town Centre is located within a conservation area.

Any alteration which affects the special historic, artistic, or architectural interest of a listed building (including character and appearance) will require listed building consent. Such works include alterations to architectural details, alterations to the interior, the installation of shop front security measures, replacement of windows and in some cases the repainting of a shop front in a different colour. A large number of the buildings within the Town Centre are listed.

Advertisement consent is required for the display of certain types of signs in particular locations

It takes the Council about two months to decide on a planning application, advertisement consent or other statutory consent. Applicants will need to build this into their timetable for carrying out their project.

The scheme would not be intended to create a uniform style to shop front design in the town. We would not want to create a uniform, uninteresting landscape. Within the scheme we should encourage diversity and distinctiveness in terms of designs, details and colours whilst retaining the principles of good design associated with the historic town centre and our own guidelines.

We should recognise that some buildings may require more modern shop fronts and that high quality modern design can add significant value to the townscape. As a general principle we should ask that projects seek to balance imaginative design with the historic context of the building and the wider area.

A Member questioned if it would be an annual programme and was advised that as this was the first year it would be run as a test or a pilot programme, and when asked if SODC would fund every year Mr McConnell advised that he didn't know as he had not yet asked the question.

When asked if he thought it was ok for tax payers money to be spent on painting shops, Mr McConnell advised that in his opinion the Town Council had a Civic responsibility to make the high street as attractive as possible and to keep both residents and visitors shopping in Henley rather than going to another more attractive town.

It was suggested that as this was an issue of Civic Pride the Chairman of the Henley in Bloom Committee should also be a part of the Committee.

It was noted that the proposed start date for the scheme is the middle of April.

Mr McConnell advised that he will bring a 6 monthly update report back to this committee.

A Member stated that they were in support of the scheme but would like assurance that everyone would be treated fairly and preference wouldn't be given to a shop in Bell Street rather than one on the Reading Road.

As Thame has successfully run a similar scheme, it was suggested that Mr McConnell contact them if he needs any assistance.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND**

that the Council support the Pilot Scheme, and

that the Working Group be made up of Councillors D Hinke and K Gehrman, SODC Planning Officer, Mr P Brampton and the Town Centre Manager.

The Chairman thanked Mr McConnell for attending the meeting.

Mr McConnell left the meeting at 8.10pm

94. JULIE PERIGO – HENLEY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mrs Perigo was unable to attend the meeting, however the update that she would have presented is attached to the minutes.

95. PROGRESS

Members received a report on progress and after the following observations noted the information contained therein.

Old Fire Station Gallery Consent given by Conservation Officer for removable footprints promoting the Gallery to be placed on the pavement from the front of the Town Hall to the Gallery.

Bus Shelter on the Reading Road One unit now occupied and will need to be included in the consultation that OCC are about to conduct.

Market Place Bollards Installation in progress. It was noted that some lorry drivers drive very close to the bollards when they are making deliveries in the Market Place.

It was **RESOLVED**

that a letter be sent to all the businesses on the Market Place and the Market Traders to request that they / their delivery drivers take extra care not to hit the bollards now that new ones have been installed.

Fairtrade Town Councillors P Phillips and J Wood meeting with the Mayor of Faringdon on 25 March to discuss their experience of being a Fairtrade town.

Decriminalisation of Parking Meeting of the four towns (Henley, Didcot, Thame and Wallingford) taking place on 28 March.

Budget Awaiting a new date for the visit to Marlborough to view their sound system.

Challenge Henley Triathlon Just Racing have now submitted their final proposed route and the consultation will now begin. HTC and all Parish Councils will have the opportunity to comment on the route.

Falaise Twinning Details of the company who provided the embossed stones in Iver Heath have been passed to the Twinning Association.

96. BUDGET

Members received and considered the budget report to 31 January 2013.

It was **RESOLVED**

that the report is noted.

97. OLD FIRE STATION GALLERY AND KINGS ARMS BARN WORKING GROUP

Members reconsidered the decision from 29 January (min 83) that the group continues to meet for another 4 meetings to complete the promotion of both the Gallery and the Barn, and that the group provides its own administrative support, invites Officers to attend meetings if their knowledge or assistance is required on specific items and continues to report to this committee.

A lengthy and in-depth discussion took place on the merits of this working group. Committee considered if it should now cease as it has met for the 6 meetings that it was set up to meet for, or if it should continue indefinitely.

A majority of Members felt that the group had achieved quite a lot, and should be allowed to continue to enable it to complete the work that it had started.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND**

that the group continues to meet with Officer support whilst it still has work to complete, and

that the notes continue to be reported back to this Committee

98. TWINNING WITH BLED

Members received and considered an update report on the twinning of Henley on Thames and Bled.

Consideration was given to the fact that although rowing is currently the strongest link between the towns, there are several other similarities:

- Bled and Henley both host International Music Festivals,
- Bled has a large Conference Centre whilst Henley has the Business School,
- both are tourist destination
- Bled has an island in the middle of a lake where weddings are conducted and Henley has Temple Island and the Town Hall

As the Mayor of Bled along with a delegation of representatives will be in the UK for a World Tourism Fair in London, it was suggested that a Special Meeting of Town Council takes place on Monday 22 April at 7pm in the Town Hall, when the signing and sealing of the Twinning Charter can occur.

In view of the urgency of the situation and the need to send the invitations to the event it was unanimously **RESOLVED**

that this Council twin with Bled, Slovenia and that the arrangements for calling a Special Meeting of the Council on 22 April 2013 for this purpose, when the signing and sealing of the twinning charter between Henley and Bled can be enacted, be approved.

99. VOLUNTEER FAIR

Following the success of the last two Volunteer Fairs requests have been received from several volunteer groups and the OCVA for two Fairs to be held this year. Two dates have been provisionally booked, Saturday 27 April and Saturday 12 October 2013.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND**

that approval is given for the fairs to be held on the Market Place on Saturday 27 April and Saturday 12 October 2013, and

that the fairs be offered to both the voluntary sector and charities.

100. FLAGPOLE USE POLICY

Members considered the Flagpole Use policy that was drawn up in 2008, it was felt that it was appropriate for current needs.

It was **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND**

i) that the flag pole policy drawn up in 2008 be adopted.

ii) that this Committee grants delegated powers to the Town Clerk to allow use of the Flag Pole by local community organizations for a fee of £50.

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Chairman

HENLEY PARTNERSHIP 2013 SUMMARY DOCUMENT

For HTC & SODC

REVISED MISSION STATEMENT

The Henley Partnership is an independent organisation whose Mission is to support local businesses and organisations to be as successful as possible, and to add value to the Henley community and economy by helping to 'join up the dots' and promote communication and co-operation between a wide variety of business, arts, education, sports and other significant Henley stakeholders

REVISED STRUCTURE

Henley has a number of important stakeholders in the Community (as illustrated by demographics from SODC), so we believe the Partnership should reflect that rather than being divided into three arbitrary groupings. Membership will be open to all, with Members being part of the overall Partnership and not divided into sector 'Groups' as before.

However, Members will be encouraged to bring Issues and Interests to the Partnerships, to be worked on in Interest or Working Groups. Each of these Groups will appoint a Co-ordinator rather than a Chair. As most of the issues to be taken up are likely to be of a relatively complex nature, with involvements and impacts across a number of business and community sectors, we believe this will encourage greater inclusivity and innovation.

The structure will look as follows:

DIRECTORS (3 – 4) : At present Jonathan Hobbs, Julie Perigo & Barrie Scott

CHAIRPERSON (as was the case until Dec 2011) : Julie Perigo

PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP

A Rep to be invited from all the active Working/Interest groups AND by invitation & request. The purpose of the Steering Group is both decision-making and information-sharing.

Regular meetings of all above every 2 months : timetabled for whole year

WORK GROUPS & INTEREST GROUPS

Current:

Henley as a Winter Destination : Peter McConnell & Julie Perigo

Henley Young Partnership: Julie Perigo & Peter Robinson

New Business Attraction & Welcome : TBC

Henley Charities Together: Keith Douglas

Health, Wealth & Wellbeing : Paul Westgarth & Alison Hesketh

In Formation:

Accommodation Providers Forum: TBC

Chilterns-focused Tourism : Karen Wade

Retail & Markets: Laurence Morris, Gillian Nahum & Julie Perigo

Membership Communication policies : Guy Outram & Chris Wellings

Sports & Recreation Together: Chris Baker

BASIC FORMAT OF ACTIVITIES

- Monthly Third Thursday Drop in Networking Meetings
- Quarterly Members' Evenings (Partnership News updates, Theme for evening & networking)
- Two-monthly Steering Group Meetings (Co-ordinators from Working groups + Directors & Invitees)
- Regular free or low-cost Workshops/ Breakfast Briefings on topics including Social Media, Recruitment, Employment Law, Marketing, Cash-flow & finance tips for SMEs etc
- Ongoing Working Groups (already including Henley Young Partnership, Henley as a Winter Destination, Charities Together, New Business & Membership Group & Sports.)

- Involvement in other Campaigns & Activities including Henley Living Advent Calendar, Henley Day of Design (in conjunction with RIBA), Health & Wealth & Wellbeing Exhibition, Henley Loyalty Card

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Suggested involvement for Henley Town Council & SODC:

RE HENLEY PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS:

Our intention is to continue to build on the excellent relationships we are developing with both Councils, with a 'working together' and collegial information-sharing ethos.

The Henley Partnership warmly invites any Council Member or official to attend any or all of our networking, professional development or other diary activity. We will continue to send the monthly invitations and Newsletter with all dates.

Councillors and other officials with a specific interest in our Working/Interest Groups are also invited to join any of them, should they wish to take an active part.

We would also like to invite the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, or their delegated representatives, to any of the two-monthly Steering Group meetings.

RE COUNCIL BUSINESS:

We suggest that invitations to Council related meetings and events (eg Market Town Action Plan) should be directed to the Chair, or Chair and Directors.

If the Council would like input/representation from a specific sector or interest group at any meetings, just flag it up and we will endeavour to field a representative.