

**St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership
Tuesday 28 June 2022 at 9.30am at Council Chamber, Cornwall Council
Offices, Penwinick Road, St Austell PL25 5DR**

Attendees:

Democratic: - Deborah George (TC), Crystal Pearce (TC), Malcolm Brown (TC),

Voluntary/Community: Sandra Heyward (Market House) (CHAIR), Chris Sampson

Business: Dale Lovatt (Business Improvement District)

Advisors: Steve Facer (CC), Rachel Galbraith (CC), Bill McCardle (RP/TC).

Also in attendance: Mike Hawes (Mei Loci)

Welcome

Sandra Heyward (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Lewis (Lewis Estate Agents), Mark Ellis (CC), Miles Lovegrove (Fluid Branding), Neil Woodward (South West Financial Services) , David Pooley (TC), Sara Gwilliams (TC).

Minutes of the meeting dated 26th May 2022

The minutes of the meeting dated 26th May 2022 were accepted as a correct record.

Mr Mike Hawes – Mei Loci – Progress Report

Mike updated the partnership on his work to date and recent walkover. He explained Mei Loci would provide a rationale for their proposals and are happy to receive input from partnership members at any time. He outlined the initial areas he was looking at including transport issues with buses, parking provision in Priory Car Park, walking distances, road routes and street layout. He identified areas and buildings of specific interest including Fore St, WRP, Truro Road, Bodmin Road Poundland, Biddicks Court and the General Wolfe. He identified potential areas to improve greening including Priory car park, town access routes and through the town centre. The station was identified as an area for improvement to encourage people into the town centre.

Mike highlighted that residents have a challenging walk into the town centre because of residential distance whereas parking is within the 400 metre hot spot used to judge standard walking distances. Presentation attached.

Properties being looked at include the vacant car park at the old police station site, the old post office site, vacant spaces near Priory car park, Poundland, Old Vicarage Place, Burtons/Dorothy Perkins, Fore Street and Gurkha restaurant.

Mei Loci are actively contacting NHS, owners, businesses etc to understand the economic position and considering options to revitalise the town centre. They are considering the size of units to encourage small businesses, including start-ups to come into and stay in the town centre. Mike discussed locations considered for the proposed NHS Health and Wellbeing hub at Carlyon Road area or possibly the Old Police station site could be an option.

There are numerous practical and architectural/historic challenges: one example of which is the Boots building, regarded by conservation officers as a very good example of 70's architecture which is probably not regarded as such by many residents so options will include seeking to improve appearance and use of buildings if they remain.

Comments

Rachel asked if Mike could bring 3D model to partnership. He said he was aiming to do that. **Sandra** commented on improving walking levels within the town centre and access routes. **Deborah** George liked idea of a health and wellbeing hub in the town centre but identified lowering pavements as a priority improvement especially Trinity Street. **Bill** stated he is keen to work with Inclusive St Austell to hold an event alongside Mike and Mei Loci to listen to people views.

Malcolm questioned the suitability of the health hub being located on the Old Post Office site and recommended that CC is approached for their latest thoughts on their preferred location.

Malcolm said he is very pleased about the direction the work is taking and stressed the need for the Town Council to remain involved in the process.

Chris thanked Mike for his work in crystallising the issues and challenges. **Chris** stressed the importance for the partnership to take on board such challenges and not shy away from difficult decisions.

Chris suggested another look at the Old Post Office site for its suitability as a Health Hub. He believed the NHS would like more space.

Dale supported Chris's comments on priorities and emphasised we must be willing to work hard and confront challenges to achieve what we want. We must consider what is best for the long term even if it is difficult and receives criticism or lack of external support.

Dale emphasised the discussion about the NHS Health Hub in the town centre which was generally supported referred to a wholly separate service than proposals from CC for a Wellbeing Hub/drop in centre which he, BID and the town council had expressed reservations. **Rachel** explained each service was different and their specific roles are not yet defined.

Dale declared a business interest in a trading units on Trinity Street before asking Mike to consider proposals for refreshing the appearance of Burton House on Trinity Street in any work Mei Loci were doing in the area. Mike said that would be considered alongside in his proposal.

Malcolm asked if the bus companies had been contacted about their services as they appeared to be making an effort to increase usage but are poorly marketed/promoted.

Action: Mike will prepare a range of suggested projects for the partnership to consider, prioritise and approve at the 26 July meeting. The town council will be kept updated.

Action: Mike will issue a summary of his 22 June town walk and today's presentation to Bill for communication to the partnership.

Action: Bill and Deborah George to meet to discuss contribution of Inclusive St Austell to Output 2 of the revitalisation work.

Action: Rachel will look at CC position on proposed health and wellbeing hub

Project Update – Bill McCardle

Output 1 Mei Loci commenced work on 23 May 2022 and will present an interim report to the board on 23 August and a final report on 25 October. They attended their first Revitalisation Partnership meeting in May, carried out a presentation to the Town Council in June, completed two town walks with Revitalisation Partnership members on 22 June and at the request of a few members are setting up an evening walk for those who could not make the daytime events.

Mike Hawes met Dale, Neil and Mike Coles at a meeting in June to discuss their concerns and with David and Bill to present some initial thoughts which he discussed during the town walkabouts.

Output 2 A town centre accessibility survey conducted by GoShopmobility has been agreed and is underway. The presentation of the activity was discussed with BID who suggested an approach. Bill is talking to Inclusive St Austell to determine how they can contribute to project. Mei Loci have open access to all this work at any time.

Output 3 Dale explained the events and engagement activity being undertaken to support the revitalisation project by BID. He provided examples of the work that the BID is engaged on including the big town dance for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, supporting the Tresory's range of activities, a forthcoming all day pride event in July which expands the traditional evening only activity, co-ordinating a new performing arts festival with the Market House, Cornwall College and Studio4 Dance studio, Tanya's Trust "Purple Day" events throughout town centre with more activities.

BID is going to increase the marketing of town centre events to reach out of town residents, tourists and those who don't normally use the town. In addition, 3 totally free to participate events are planned during August for young people and parents including All the Fun of the Fair all free and new and revamped events include a Garden Festival in September. Dale explained all events are promoted on the BID St Austell town website.

Action Dale will look into the practicality of BID issuing a timetable of events to the partnership. (the information is on the BID web)

Output 4 Chris Sampson explained the education work being undertaken by Laura Pedlar Community Engagement Manager at Brannel School on behalf of the Education Group. St Mewan and Carclaze Primary schools are engaged in a project looking at the past, present and future of St Austell while Poltair, Penrice and Brannel are working on the future of St Austell project.

Bill outlined the 2nd part of the education project which relates to research into the skills needs of local business through a questionnaire to businesses from the BID followed by a report of the findings and information provided from the Jobcentre, Federation of Small Business (FSB), Chamber of Commerce, IOS & Cornwall Enterprise Partnership and Cornwall College St Austell.

Output 5 Bill explained the importance of identifying and developing a leisure economy for St Austell as part of the brief to Mei Loci and BID. He said that background research had been carried out by Mark Lewis and Ann Marie Rodgers in 2021 identifying empty and derelict property that could be considered for re-purposing. This information in hard copy form had been passed to Mei Loci.

Output 6 Bill referred to Output 5

Output 7 The LCWIP was progressing with consultancy via CC and Sustrans. Two online events had been held in St Austell attended by David P and Bill M where David's suggestions of possible routes had been communicated to both organisations.

Comments

Rachel asked about any desire for 6th form education provision in St Austell and Chris explained it was an ongoing issue.

Mike said the new Sky School would probably be keen to find out about the education project.

Action: Bill to contact Sky School about the education project

Town Council

See below - the town council update related to information on Levelling Up provided by Steve Facer from CC

Financial Update

Bill advised that the first payment for services had been made and recorded in the income and expenditure report which will be produced for future meetings.

Any Other Business

Steve Facer explained that various projects had been considered for a St Austell Levelling Up Fund bid but as none was at the ready to go stage it had been decided not to proceed at this time and look to submitting a bid in 2023. He stated the work the partnership was currently doing to produce a vision and masterplan would put the town in a good position for a future bid in 2023 and beyond.

Mike Hawes asked Steve for any guidance on how best to focus any bid and Steve said he would check with CC and get back with an answer. **Chris** asked Steve how St Austell should express an interest in a future bid and Steve said the most appropriate way was to link with Steve Double MP to ensure his support as well as keeping Mark Ellis and CC updated.

Malcolm asked Steve if he had any information on recent speculation about funding cuts to the A30 St Austell link road and other transport matters affecting St Austell. Steve said he didn't have any information but he will take the question away and seek a response.

Rachel stated someone from the Safe & Wellbeing Hub will attend the July meeting to update on their proposed activity.

Sandra raised a question from **Mark Ellis** about the possibility of holding hybrid meeting for those who couldn't attend in person. There was a discussion where **Deborah** said she preferred face to face meetings but recognised the benefit of hybrid. **Malcolm** said members really needed to attend in person especially over the next few crucial months as we make decisions.

Rachel asked if we should consider the timing and attendance of the July and Aug meetings because of the holiday season. The sense of the meeting was that face to face should be the norm and be encouraged but hybrid was appropriate and should be looked into. **Bill** said the timing and content of meetings was under constant review to ensure the partnership achieved its objective to deliver a vision and masterplan by 31 December 2022.

Everyone commented that although the meeting was not well attended it had been very productive with a useful and worthwhile exchange of views and ideas

Chris gave his apologies for the July meeting.

Rachel announced this would be her last meeting as she was leaving CC to take up a role in the private sector. Sandra on behalf of the partnership thanked her for all her work to support the partnership and wished her well in her new career.

Date of Next Meetings

***** The next meeting will be on Tuesday 26 July at 2pm – 3.30pm at the Council Chamber.**

The key item will be a presentation from Mike Hawes Mei Loci on his initial suggestions on the vision and masterplan. The meeting will confirm priorities. **Attendance in person is highly recommended to enable full discussion of outline proposals. Online provision will be available for anyone who cannot attend in person but by its nature it could limit engagement.**

Speakers from CC will update the partnership on the latest Levelling Up guidance and the proposed Safe and Well Hub.

The meeting closed at 11.15am

****** Since agreed that the meeting will be 9.30am to 11am on Tuesday 26th July 2022 in the Council Chamber at Penwinnick Road.**