

Future Oswestry Meeting

Notes of Future Oswestry Group (FOG) meeting held Thursday 8th December 2022 at Oswestry Guildhall.

Partners	Oswestry Town Council (OTC)	Shropshire Council (SC)	Oswestry BID	Community Representatives
1. Welcome and apologies		Alice James		
2. Notes of the last meeting	Notes of the last meeting were agreed.			
3. Declarations of interest	None.			
4. Future Oswestry Plan and stakeholder engagement	<p><u>Future Oswestry Plan endorsement</u></p> <p><i>Update from Joe Bubb:</i></p> <p>The Cabinet report is complete and will go to Cabinet on 14/12/22.</p> <p><u>Delivery Plan</u></p> <p><i>Update from Joe Bubb:</i></p> <p>The Delivery Plan Working Group met on the 24th November. It discussed project activities and identified the priority (low/medium /high) and timescales (short, medium or long term) for each of the key projects. Some of the project activities have subsequently been grouped together.</p> <p>Emma Williams will be grouping these rankings into a table/graph so we can discuss the range of projects and priorities. Highest priority and shortest timeframe at the top. Emma is currently working on Investment Plans for all of Shropshire's market towns.</p> <p>Ian Follington will look at the ambitions for each of the projects so the delivery plan links back to the Future Oswestry Plan and vision.</p> <p><u>Stakeholder engagement</u></p> <p><i>Update from Peter Lloyd:</i></p> <p>The working group listed 4 types of engagement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General engagement - for example information sharing via social media/press coverage, sharing next steps for Church Street, designs in shop windows etc. 2. Stakeholders engagement - for example specific engagement for a project e.g. Access group, businesses etc. for Church Street design. 3. Wider engagement - for example involving groups or people in the preparation of ideas for Festival Square, or for testing design ideas – this could be meetings, market stalls, etc. 4. Engagement with FOG through open meetings and regular newsletter/updates – frequency of these to be discussed. 			

	<p>The fourth type hasn't been a big part of Future Oswestry's repertoire so far, and it may be that some greater public visibility and engagement with the public of board members themselves would benefit the organisation's work. A section of the Partnership agreement headed 'accountability' envisaged this, describing how "Councillors' community leadership role within this Partnership will be vital for gaining commitment, building trust and developing shared purpose and understanding."</p> <p>When open meetings or workshops are used will depend on the nature of the work at the time. Engagement should advance the process, and not just be engagement for engagement's sake. Open meetings may be useful as part of a communications strategy when it may be thought necessary to help people envision what FOG actually is, to put a human face to the organisation, test opinion, and create that shared purpose and understanding.</p> <p>As far as governance is concerned, the need for engagement is already embodied in the Partnership agreement. In a sense what matters more than an extensively updated governance policy is the practice that is followed in putting engagement objectives into operation in the day-to-day work. This makes engagement a live thing – members and officers opportunistically looking for occasions when engagement would be beneficial.</p> <p>In practice this is already being done, and all that may need to change is that greater attention is given to our collective responsibility for engagement, along with recognition that this may involve occasional face-to-face public meetings that allow discussion of FOG's objectives, assumptions and processes.</p> <p>An additional change that may facilitate this, and that members may wish to consider, is to nominate a small working subgroup of the board to start to plan engagement activities as the projects within the delivery plan come forward, with engagement activities as a standard item on the FOG agenda.</p> <p><i>Members discussed holding annual/6-monthly public meetings where FOG could give updates and seek feedback.</i></p>
<p>5. Communications and engagement plan</p>	<p><i>Update from Alice James:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with Ruth Sperring (TC) & John Waine (BID) to discuss how we coordinate comms • Have shared the Oswestry Christmas video on Shropshire Council social media • Currently writing up draft communications following Shropshire Council cabinet paper on 14 December regarding the Future Oswestry Plan • Writing up a press release on Church Street works and Designs in Mind (part of the HSHAZ) <p><i>Group noted that the BID Christmas video is excellent.</i></p>
<p>5. Updates on priority projects</p>	
<p>a. Transport and connectivity</p>	<p><u>Church Street</u></p> <p><i>Update from Joe Bubb:</i></p>

	<p>Church Street resurfacing scheme to be pulled forward into 22/23 financial year. Regular maintenance checks will be carried out on the hogs, signage and sandbags that make up the temporary traffic management system.</p> <p><i>Suggestion that resurfacing in Church Street or the Cambrian Gateway could incorporate new technologies – example of phone charging pavements in Telford https://newsroom.telford.gov.uk/News/Details/16526.</i></p> <p>BID meeting with SC Highways. Clean. Next week meeting with Environmental Associates and Alice- firmed up dates on delivery programme, images.</p> <p><u>Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Project (LCWIP)</u></p> <p><i>No updates at this time.</i></p> <p>LCWIP- high level strategic consultation. Rose and Alex currently looking at the top interventions (a number in Oswestry)- optioneering and feasibility work. More detailed than the study itself- due February/March. Joe would like to test out the appendix with someone local with an interest (DfT and rural part of UKSPF). Duncan/Peter.</p> <p><u>Bus station</u></p> <p><i>Members agreed that the bus station needs to be a priority if there is an ambition to reduce traffic in the town. Concerns about lack of driver or passenger toilets and the need for better information (such as through interactive screens). An interim solution could be to make toilets available in the Cambrian Building (subject to it coming under SC ownership) or to look into installing a shipping container with toilet facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Concern that current maintenance contract is not delivering a quality service.</i></p>
<p>b. High Street Heritage Action Zone</p>	<p><i>Update from Sam Jones:</i></p> <p>Capital Grant Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business in Willow Street has received a small grant to improve signage • Another enhancement grant has come in • Red Lion application is with OTC, has been passed by the HSHAZ Board • Designs in Mind has opened its new workspace in Cross Street with a shop and quiet room on the ground floor. • Scaffolding is down in the new flats in Cross Street. Impressive dormers windows on the back. Shopfront going in in the new year. <p>Public Realm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clawdd Du – Now waiting on Highways to get back to me to issue statutory notice to remove bins. Not heard anything in weeks and trying to escalate. This is the last piece of the jigsaw to remove the bins so we can work on the site. • Metal elements are complete. They are going for galvanising and powder coating. Hopefully will be installed before Christmas.



Other

- Shopfront design guide initial meeting held. They will be working with the Civic Society to put together the guide. It will be a user-friendly guide which will be written in a way to break down terminology, etc.
- Walk around with conservation and planning to look at breaches on shop fronts
- Cultural Consortium have set date for Love Oswestry 2023 and put together a programme.
- Mary Hignett application in for Love Oswestry 2023
- Meeting with OTC and Museum abouts Heritage Open Days 2023
- Meeting with Wem Town Council to look at running a similar shop front scheme there

Llyd Mansion

Discussion around the appropriate level of involvement FOG should have with this asset. There is potential to attract more funding if Llyd Mansion's ownership moved to a Building Preservation Trust. BID plans to hold a meeting in the new year to gauge public interest in this approach. 'Heritage Asset at Risk' status will attract more funding.

Sports Direct Alley

SC Highways, Planning and Legal teams are working to clarify the alley's ownership. There are options to undertake works through either a licence (similar to current HSHAZ alley works) or through a dedication to enable OTC or SC to take on responsibility - both options would require agreement with the freeholder.

c. Road signage project

Verbal update from Joe Bubb:

There are three categories of signs requiring work. The survey and map provided by BID would need to be filtered to identify which signs fall into which category.

1. Signs to be removed (either sign only or sign and post)

	<p>Once the signs (and also posts if appropriate) to be removed have been identified as a list, Victoria Doran (Highways Maintenance Manager) can ask Kier RE their resources and timescales and seek a quote.</p> <p>2. Signs that need adjusting (but also possibly hedge trimming)</p> <p>Again Victoria Doran would need a list which included the adjustment required – turning/straightening, trimming back etc.</p> <p>3. Signs that are damaged / and need replacing</p> <p>Replacement of signs would need to be looked at individually, as non-standard signs would need to be looked at by a technician and costed up, as there could be an additional design cost. SC would only replace signs deemed necessary for replacement.</p> <p>There may be some aspects of the works that OTC would be willing to quote for and take on, through there are potential liabilities as OTC does not have street work permits. BID are prepared to fund a surveyor (e.g. Highline) to undertake this work.</p> <p><u>'Brown signs'</u></p> <p>The existing brown signs refer to the now defunct Heritage Centre and need to be updated. A consensus on the new wording will need to be reached with Oswestry Borderland Tourism.</p> <p>Estimated costs:</p> <table data-bbox="544 1205 986 1312"> <tr> <td>Re-design:</td> <td>£200- £400</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Erect on existing post;</td> <td>£150- £300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Erect new post:</td> <td>£400 - £800</td> </tr> </table> <p>Once we have an idea of possible costs, we could then discuss with the partners and the Oswestry Borderland Tourism Group on possible options to update the out of date brown signs.</p> <p>Joe Bubb, Arren Roberts, Adele Nightingale, Victoria Doran (Highways Maintenance Manager), Zoe Mortimer (Highways Operations) and Derek Buchanan (Traffic Engineering Manager) will meet in the new year to discuss the next steps and clarify the role of OTC and BID in undertaking or funding this work.</p>	Re-design:	£200- £400	Erect on existing post;	£150- £300	Erect new post:	£400 - £800
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<p>d. Co-working space pilot at the Memorial Hall</p>	<p><i>No updates at this time.</i></p> <p>FOG members asked to promote the projects as much as possible. The initial funding is only up until March 2023.</p>						
<p>e. Capital infrastructure projects</p>	<p><u>Tree and hedgecutting</u></p> <p><i>Update from Joe Bubb:</i></p> <p>The vast majority of hedges are privately owned, boundary hedges. They are the responsibility of the landowner to maintain and they must ensure that</p>						

	<p>they do not restrict access to the public highway (which includes carriageways and footways).</p> <p>If an overgrown hedge is reported, the local technician will visit site and carry out an assessment. If they think it is impeding the highway they will either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knock on the door if it is obvious who it belongs to and if they are in, ask them to cut the hedge back • Arrange for a letter to be sent to the property, if it is obvious who it belongs to • Arrange for a Land Registry search if the landowner is unknown, then arrange for a letter to be sent, once the information is received (Land Registry details can sometimes come back very quickly, but in some circumstances take quite a while) <p>The letter explains the landowners responsibility under the Highways Act and requests that they arrange to have the hedge cut back within 14 days, or contact SC to explain why this may not be possible (for example if they think they don't own it, if it has nesting birds in, or they need a slightly longer timeframe to get the work done).</p> <p>If SC do not hear from a landowner and the hedge is not cut back, the Tree team will then send an enforcement letter out, again requesting that they carry out the work within 14 days and also explaining that if they do not, the Council will do so and look to recharge them.</p> <p>If the owner still does not react, SC will arrange for our contractors to carry out the works and then recharge our costs.</p> <p>However, the biggest issue with hedge cutting and the main reason why getting them cut back is delayed, is due to the bird nesting season, which applies from April until the end of August. The Wildlife and Countryside Act makes it an offence to knowingly disturb and/or damage birds and their nests. If there is a very clear <i>danger</i> to the public, rather than just a nuisance, then we can justify getting the hedge cut, but in general they are more of an inconvenience, so the cutting is often delayed due to nesting birds.</p> <p>Overgrown trees and hedges can be reported at https://improvingyourroads.shropshire.gov.uk/.</p> <p><i>Priority areas identified by members as Gobowen Road (obscuring sign), Upper Church Street and Salop Gasworks.</i></p> <p><u>FOG work programme</u></p> <p><i>Discussion of need for more sub-meetings/working groups reporting to the main FOG group on specific items. Concern that there is significant pressure on individual officers to address long lists of tasks between meetings.</i></p>
<p>f. Restore Your Railway bid update</p>	<p><i>Verbal update from Adele Nightingale:</i></p> <p>Contacted the consultant to share the Restore Your Railway bid business case and awaiting response. Expecting an update from the DfT about the status of the bid in the new year.</p>
<p>6. Update from Property and Development Team</p>	<p><i>Update from Steve Law:</i></p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am pleased to confirm we have agreed terms for the surrender of the Cambrian Railway Building from the Trust and it will now pass back to Shropshire Council before the end of the calendar year. We have immediately started to revisit the option appraisal work undertaken previously and in support of the wider masterplan. Further to previous updates there is already ongoing maintenance work which we hope to conclude in the new year and we will be setting out next steps for the future of the building which we will share as soon as possible. 2. The decision has been taken to retain Castle View and work has started to make it as sustainable as possible for the future. This has included engagement with public sector partners to endeavour to secure future lettings and to make sure the building is utilised as much as possible moving forward. I would welcome any potential suggestions in terms of tenants. We hope to also engage with OTC to consider potential options for the future. 3. Work has recommenced to further the potential to transfer the Centre (Oak Street) to OTC to support a future hub and Arren and I met earlier this week. <i>Three partners are interested in taking a long term lease and creating a community hub.</i> 4. We are continuing to have very positive discussions with a prospective commercial tenant for the former Morrisons store and terms are now being drawn up. I hope to be able to provide more updates on this in due course but I would ask for this to remain confidential at this time. (Tenant is still commercially sensitive).
7. Levelling Up Fund Round 2	<i>No update at this time.</i>
8. Governance	<i>No update at this time.</i>
9. Any Other Business	<p><u>Police Commissioner</u></p> <p><i>Verbal update from Adele Nightingale:</i></p> <p>BID is in talks with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) regarding a multistranded project focusing on improving safety throughout the town.</p> <p><i>FOG endorses in principle this work by the BID. Members agreed that BID should lead on this project and earmark the money from the Police Commissioner. Concerns raised about a number of recent break ins. Potential for the PCC to match fund BID for future security patrols. OTC have invited BID to join Police Partnership Meetings.</i></p> <p><u>Thank you and good bye to Hayley Owen from everyone at FOG.</u></p>
10. Date of next meeting and agenda items	Thursday 12 th January 2023
Actions	
1	SC comms to produce press release on status of the Future Oswestry Plan. AJ

2	SC comms to work with FOG members to produce accompanying radio/video content on the Future Oswestry Plan.	AJ
3	Select dates for Delivery Plan Working Group meetings.	JB/RC
4	Potential Delivery Plan project: BID and the SC Growth Hub team to consider producing an Oswestry pack for potential investors and businesses.	AN/JB
5	Establish a public engagement working group	JB/AR/PL
6	Liaise on the upcoming Church Street resurfacing project.	ALL
7	Approach James Willocks (Passenger Transport Group Manager) and Andy Evans (Network Solutions Teams Manager) regarding the maintenance contract for the bus station.	JB
8	Provide members with list of available funding for the Llyd Mansion.	SJ
9	Invite Cllr Dean Carroll (Portfolio Holder - Growth and Regeneration) to February FOG meeting. Arrange tour of Oswestry to follow meeting.	JB