

Buxton Town Team

Ideas and Vision Group

NOTES of the meeting on 9th August 2012

Present:

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Janet Miller | Joe Dugdale | Carole Mordaunt-Todd | Mike Bryant |
| Rachel Hoodith | Claire Hoodith | Julian Cohen | Nina Lubman |
| Paul Armstrong | Alan Thompson | Roger Floyd | Judith Milling |
| Roddie MacLean | Neil Scowcroft | Tom Rhodes | Rachael Quinn |
| Adrian Brown | Becky Gibbs | | |

Apologies: Tina Heathcote, Linda Baldry, John Hudghton and Durham Grigg.

Note Taker: Mike Bryant

Agenda The agenda drafted by Joe was agreed.

Previous meetings: (1) Joe outlined what had been done at the first meeting of the Ideas and Vision Group on 19th July (notes had been circulated).

(2) Janet outlined the progress made by the Setting Up Group (a summary was available). It was their intention that the Ideas and Vision Group should not be hampered in generating ideas but that a system would be needed for accepting recommendations and adjudicating between competing ideas. A proposal for defining the membership of the Town Team was also under consideration.

(3) Janet then outlined the work of the first Communications Group (a summary was again available).

Full notes of all meetings are available from Janet on request. Contact: janet@jmassociates.demon.co.uk.

Presentation by Nina Lubman (a Buxton-based estate and relocation agent specialising in commercial property):

Nina explained that she was an agent for a variety of commercial property in and around Buxton and worked with a wide variety of landlords. She explained that landlords' circumstances can differ, from individuals, some with mortgages on the property, up to financial institutions, such as pension funds. Some were local while others were based out of the area; some managed their properties themselves while others used a managing agent. The tenants were equally varied from national chains to local small traders. She often worked as sole agent and sometimes jointly with other agents. In response to Julian Cohen's statement about closures of retail units, Nina said businesses close for a number of reasons including personal. With regard to marketing boards and vacant units, she said they can be unoccupied for a range of reasons including being caught up in chains or extended negotiations.

The rents for retail units in Spring Gardens were higher than in other parts of Buxton, as were the business rates. The current asking rent for Millets former shop, for example, would be £40,000 a year plus VAT at 20%. Depending on a number of factors, a deposit equal to up to six month's rent may be required in advance for some units. Terms vary depending on the landlord's instruction and negotiations. The outskirts such London Road and the far end of High Street were more affordable and were often not subject to VAT or business rates at present. However there were sometimes issues of confidence about opening a business where neighbouring premises were vacant such as on High Street.

Enquiries are still being received but flexibility was required by landlords and tenants, with Nina working to negotiate an outcome that both parties feel happy to accept. Buxton's shops were not always suitable for the national chains because of the small footprint of the existing buildings and the absence of rear loading facilities, and they are not always suitable for local businesses as they can be too large.

Nina explained that while she had a duty to obtain a good deal and satisfactory tenant for the landlords, she did try to steer deals for the overall benefit of Buxton as in turn that would benefit Buxton including her landlord's investment, and subject to her landlord's agreement.

In answer to a question about rates, Nina and Paul Armstrong explained that the business rate is set nationally at a level of 42p in the £1 of rateable value. It is collected by the borough council but paid over to the Government which feeds some of it back for local expenditure. There is currently a scheme of relief whereby businesses with a rateable value of under £6,000 pay nothing (subject to meeting certain criteria). The relief tapers down to zero at a rateable value of £12,000. Units in Spring Gardens are likely to be over this figure. Nina hopes that the current rates scheme will be extended for a further period to support small businesses and start ups. There are special concessions for charity shops but only a small part of these are controlled by the local council. Nina would like to see them offered in secondary areas and not in primary locations such as Spring Gardens.

Workshop Session The meeting then divided into groups to work in detail on selected projects. The

Topics discussed were: Incubator Units
 Pop-Up Shops
 Improvements to the Public Realm
 Encouraging residents to shop locally
 Revitalising the street market

The detailed outcomes of these workshops are appended to these notes.

Report back and open discussion: Each group reported briefly on its conclusions and this led to some wider discussion. The following significant points came out of this:

1. Adrian Brown said he would ask the board of Vision Buxton to take the lead on Pop-Up Shops. This would mean VB providing the initial finance and taking the legal responsibility.
2. Alan and Nina would continue to explore the possibility of incubator units for retail and other businesses.
3. Julian Cohen said that funding was urgently needed and that Nestlé should be seen as a source. The company might not be under a contractual obligation to pay more for bottling Buxton Water but there was a moral case for them supporting the town more generously and this should be pursued.
4. Moving the library into a more central position could only be done if Derbyshire County Council were proposing to vacate the Kents Bank site. It was agreed to explore their intention as a first step.
5. The meeting was reminded that the remit of the Town Team was not just retail but the prosperity and quality of life of the whole town.
6. Paul Armstrong offered to update the Schedule of Ideas with the latest background information available from the borough council. His document is appended to these notes.

Date of next meeting This was set for Tuesday, September 11th, at 7.30 pm. The venue was to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at about 9.20 pm.

The above notes should be read with the following supporting documents:

1. Notes from the Workshop on Pop-Up Shops and Small Business Incubators
2. Notes from the Workshop on Improving the Public Realm
3. Notes from the Workshop on Encouraging residents to Shop Locally
4. Notes from the Workshop on Revitalising the Market
5. Paul Armstrong's update on the borough council's work in relation to the Schedule of Town Team Ideas.