

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

30 AUGUST 2012

'PORTAS PILOT'

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

1. Background

- 1.1 On 30 July 2012, the Town Council's Policy and Finance Committee received a copy of a letter dated 24 July 2012 from the Department for Communities and Local Government (**attached**) advising that the bid for funding from the Portas Pilot scheme had not been successful, but that opportunities existed to become a Town Team Partner and to benefit from a support programme to help put elements of the plans into action.
- 1.2 The P&F Committee considered funding projects within the bid in order to help regenerate the town centre. Debate was held on whether projects should fall within the remit of the Policy and Finance Committee or the Partnership Committee.
- 1.3 The Town Clerk advised that it was likely that any projects suggested by the Town Team would need a high level of officer involvement from the Town Council as the Team had no constitution, bank account or insurance.
- 1.4 The P&F Committee agreed that the Town Team should provide more specific costings and information on the proposed projects and present these to the Partnership Committee to consider taking projects forward from their budget. It was recommended **to the Partnership Committee to consider making funding from its budget (and officer support) available, to take forward appropriate projects contained within the Portas Pilot Bid and to determine the most appropriate mechanism for managing such projects.**
- 1.5 The P&F Committee agreed to consider supporting further appropriate projects, particularly if match funding could be obtained and the project was one which the Council supported.
- 1.6 **The P&F Committee resolved that the Town Council would consider funding appropriate projects which come forward from the 'Town Team' or other projects for the town centre (subject to sufficient funding being available, as determined by the Policy and Finance Committee).**

2. Town 'Bid' Team

- 2.1 As requested by the Policy and Finance Committee, the Town 'Bid Team' met on 6 August 2012. Three non-Town Councillors attended with the objective of providing more specific costings and information on the proposed projects to present these to the Partnership Committee.

- 2.2 There were only three non-Town Council members of the Team present.
- 2.3 **Attached** is an email dated 26 July 2012 with suggestions regarding the Portas Bid.
- 2.4 It was suggested by those present at the above meeting that the projects would need to be taken piecemeal, subject to funding, and that enhancing the market should be a priority (including siting the stalls in the centre of the High Street). It was recognised that the need to take forward the Signage Strategy was also crucial.
- 2.5 The Bid Team considered that the priorities should be :
- 2.5.1 *Town Team to review the market business plan and develop further.*
- 2.5.2 *Organise three Winter Sundays (three Sundays prior to Christmas) which should include Christmas markets, entertainment, marketing, removing traffic and retailers opening on Sundays.*
- 2.6 Consideration was then given as to who would organise the Winter Sundays. It was suggested that the Town Council should lead on the organisation of the Winter Sundays.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider the suggestions made by the Town 'Bid' Team.
- 3.2 The Committee is asked to consider supporting projects that expand our historic market, moving the market to the centre of the High Street, giving people more reasons to come to town, making market days more of an event and bringing spaces back into use. These are projects that are potentially feasible (subject to business planning) but would have an effect on the Town Council staffing resources so would need to be appropriately funded.
- 3.3 The Town Council has recently undertaken the repainting of the bollards around the Market Cross area (to enhance the Children's Trail). It is apparent that much of the street furniture in the Town Centre needs repainting and/or repairing. Central Bedfordshire Council has informed that there is no funding available to do this type of work. Our M.P. has also drawn it to our attention that the positioning of the history board on the Old Fire Station could be improved. The Committee is asked to consider allocating a budget for street furniture refurbishment. It is envisaged that some refurbishment of seats could possibly be sponsored.

4. Recommendations

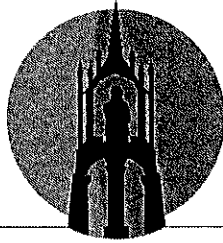
- 4.1 Identify and consider priority projects and appropriate funding.**
- 4.2 Consider allocating a budget for street furniture refurbishment.**

Report Author :
Pat Kingsnorth, Town Clerk

Terms of Reference in respect of budgets :

Decision-making arrangements:

- 1 *The annual budget shall be developed by the Committee and recommended to the Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council for approval, only where Central Bedfordshire Council makes funding available in any financial year.*
- 2 Thereafter, the Committee will make decisions at its meetings. Decisions will be made by consensus whenever possible. However, if no consensus can be reached, a majority vote, based on one vote per core member, will carry the decision, with the Chair having the casting vote if the vote is equal.



LEIGHTON BUZZARD

TOWN TEAM MANIFESTO

As a Portas Pilot we will revolutionise our High Street by...

... expanding our historic market

We will offer a comprehensive support package for new traders to encourage them to sell their wares from stalls in the High Street on Tuesdays and Saturdays, our regular market days. This package will also benefit existing traders keen to use the web to promote their goods and to broadcast details of their special offers.

We will also add to the diversity of our market by hosting speciality markets on Saturdays throughout the year, building on our popular monthly farmers market. We will also raise the profile of the market through regular features, promotions and merchandising, making far greater use of web and mobile media.

... moving our market to the centre of the High Street

We will create a much friendlier shopping environment on market days, especially Saturdays, by running the stalls back in the centre of the High Street rather than down both sides. By creating lots more room and ensuring all of the stalls feel the sun everyone can be much more comfortable and relaxed strolling between stalls. And we lose the problem of having to come out blind behind a stall to cross the High Street.

At the same time we will invest in improving the whole look of the market. Refurbished stalls and new branded canopies will give the market an attractive appearance and more modern, vital feel.

... running pop-up markets on 'Summer Sundays'

We will host pop up markets – with groups of stalls in 'hot spot' locations in the town centre - during our programme of Summer Sundays throughout July, August and September. Pop up markets will offer budding retailers the ideal opportunity to have a go at trading on the High Street and 'newbies' will get preferential treatment when making bookings and an equal chance of snagging prime position for their stall.

At the same time we will be encouraging everyone with a shop on the High Street to come out onto the pavement to trade, as the road becomes the footway and the footway is filled with chairs, tables and wares.

TOWN TEAM MANIFESTO

... giving people more reasons to come to town

We will provide people with excellent excuses to come into town, especially on weekends, by expanding the programme of events and activities that use the town centre as their stage. Already, our annual May Fayre, Carnival, Living History Day, Christmas Festival Weekend and Christmas Carol Concert add colour and vibrancy to the town centre, drawing large and enthusiastic crowds to the High Street. And these events show people will respond in large numbers when their visit becomes an experience.

We will work with local commercial and community transport operators to ensure everyone can attend our events.

... launching Summer Sundays with a Summer Festival Weekend

We will add a Summer Festival to our regular calendar of events to mark the official launch of a programme of Summer Sundays. Throughout July, August and September our town centre will be a car free zone for four hours every Sunday. We will steward a circuit with the High Street at its heart so families can cycle, skate and stroll in safety.

Alongside band concerts in Parson's Rec there will be street entertainment and music in Church Square, street theatre, art exhibitions and demonstrations in the Market Square, pop up markets along the High Street and North Street at 'hot spots'. The 1 km car-free circuit will be peppered with rest spots, shop-front stalls and open air seating serviced by local cafés and concessions. The family-friendly ambience and entertainment will extend into the evening on selected September days to widen involvement and bring a benefit to local restaurants and hostellers who serve refreshments and food at outdoor tables.

With so many Leighton people commuting out all week it is really important that we give them a reason to spend more of their weekend leisure time in the town and successful Summer Sundays will be a brilliant way of doing this. At the same time this will give a powerful economic boost to a range of businesses operating on the High Street.

... making market days more of an event

We will make the regular Saturday markets held throughout the year more like events. We have been given some great ideas for how to do this, and equally important, offers of help! Moving the market to the centre of the High Street really helps by creating bigger and more useful spaces in which to host activities. And at the same time we will be looking for ways to make it simpler and quicker to set up event spaces in the Church Square and around the Market Cross.

... creating more local parking for Summer Sundays

There are lots of businesses based around the town centre whose car parks we hope to annex for people to use for free on Summer Sundays! While everyone in the town will be encouraged to walk and cycle there will be neighbours who have to drive and needing somewhere near to park. Lots of businesses help out with local events. Making use of their car parks on Sundays would be a great way to cement their citizenship.

We will recruit these businesses to the cause!

TOWN TEAM MANIFESTO

... creating links to the High Street through time and place

One of the brilliant concepts that came out of the community consultation was to timeline the seminal events in the town's history and use these events to creatively build connections that draw people into the High Street. This has real potential, if done well, both to stimulate interest and direct people into and around the town centre using a creative combination of physical and virtual imagery and 'storytelling'. And at the same time it helps address one of the biggest issues holding back the High Street— its invisibility to the thousands of people passing yards away on the town's nondescript inner ring road.

Creating these connections and encouraging people to follow them, is vital for every one of the small shops trading from premises in the town's many mews and alleyways. Seed corn funding will allow us to bring this concept to life. The result will help to generate the footfall that provides businesses in the town's tucked-away places with their economic lifeline.

We will find this funding and make the concept a reality.

... bringing spaces back into use

We will work with local landlords to bring neglected spaces in their buildings into use, including creating studio, workshop and gallery space for showcasing the work of local artists. This will we hope result in the creation of a hub for the various creative arts groups operating in the town and for whom Summer Sundays delivers an audience on their doorstep.

... creating a business pack on harnessing the benefits of modern media

We will offer a complete modern media business pack to all local businesses trading on our High Street which will help them to make use of all the tools now available, including the web, social media and location-based services like Google Maps. The pack will include rights to use the dynamic new Leighton Buzzard branding and associated guidelines. It will also offer access to the web-based local business forum, a place where local businesses and traders can get together to co-ordinate on initiatives and be heard by the council.

... creating augmented reality trails

We will bring the idea of a trail into the 21st Century by producing an augmented reality phone app that adds a layer of immersive content to our great historic and interest trails. Not only will people see the sights and sounds of Leighton Buzzard, they will experience them in new ways making the whole experience much more engaging.

... creating the 24-hour High Street using 'StreetScreen'

When it comes to technology the sky is the limit and we will look to make Leighton Buzzard High Street the most high tech high street of any market town in the country.

Using smart phones and NFC¹ passers by can take control of any shop front. It makes the window display much more dynamic, increases footfall and it's fun!

¹ Near Field Communication



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Communities and
Local Government

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24 July 2012

Dear Town Team

I would like to thank you for being one of the 419 bids we received from Town Teams across the country to become one of our Portas Pilots. The competition was very stiff, and unfortunately on this occasion your application was not successful.

However, I have been impressed by the enthusiastic and imaginative response to Mary Portas's Review, which has provided the catalyst for communities up and down the country to come together to revive their town centres. I don't want to lose the incredible momentum that has been created and want to be sure that no town is left behind during our ongoing campaign to breathe new life into our high streets. Therefore, I am calling on all the Town Teams' **local MPs to come forward and sign a national pledge** to put their high streets first and become Town Team Partners.

Those that sign up to become Town Team Partners will receive backing from a multi-million pound support programme to help put elements of their plans into action. And as a Town Team Partner you will have the opportunity to attend workshops in your area, meet regularly with town teams across the country to share their experiences and lessons learned from others, including the 27 Portas Pilots; and join an online community to receive tips and advice from retail experts.

I hope that your partnership will build on the enthusiasm generated through this competition to push forward with your proposals to revitalise your high streets, and that you will work with your local MP and local authority to ensure that your leadership, vision, and energy can make a real difference to your local area.

I will be writing to all MPs in September to set out further details on how they can apply to make you a **Town Team Partner**.

GRANT SHAPPS MP

From: colin ashby
Sent: 26 July 2012 16:50
To: Cllr Stephen Cotter; Pat Kingsnorth; davidhopkin@msn.com
Cc: vharvey@talktalk.net; loula_munoz@hotmail.com
Subject: Portas Bid

Steve

I can't make Monday evening as I am away from LB for a couple of days first time in 6 years seeing as I work 6 day weeks like a lot of independents in LB and after the last three months my family has had we need a short break.

We need to get a Town Team together. There is an excellent piece of work from the Association of Town Centre Managers which i think that everyone should read first on 100 ways to improve the High Street, or something like that. It includes a lot of things that the I Love LB Group and the original Big Plan was on about. Any money that the Town Council has for such things as signage, tourism and heritage would be better a better spend than the Summer Sundays which frankly would do nothing for the town, which is one of the reasons I personally walked away from participating in the bid. We need people in Monday to Saturday first before we start on the Sunday. We would be better off getting the Market improved (which we seem to be going backwards) and getting the signage improved as I suggested before everything went off at a tangent. We need to get the basics right.

I haven't properly looked at the Governments proposals for the extra money they have but I think we have to go in with something a lot stronger than Summer Sundays. The technical side of the bid I am all for but the Summer Sunday, no.

The Town Team I believe has to come under the Partnership Committee and any monies and policy has to come from that body. There has to be a bit more research and debate on this subject. So what i would ask is that the Town Team proposal, which was the first on the Portas list is discussed properly at the next Partnership Committee meeting and I would suggest that inviting some people from some of the local community groups and Churches Together would be a good idea for this meeting.

Colin