

Hebden Bridge Partnership

Minutes of General Meeting held on Monday 2 Feb 2015 at Hebden Bridge Town Hall.

Present: Bob Deacon (chair), Andrew Bibby (secretary), Paul Forrest, Daniel Hodkinson, Kate Glynn, Lucy Hartley, Victoria Dimintrova, Gwen Goddard, Dave Nelson, Sue Mellis, D G Crabtree, Cllr Janet Battye, Myra James, Susan Quick, Tony McGovern, Stephen Curry, Hilary Chadwick, Maureen Ludlam, Lesley Mackay, Anthony Rae, Thomas Bull, Val Cryne, Cllr Jonathan Timbers, Ralph Nimmann, Mike Troke

1. Apologies: Cllr Dave Young, Gerard Liston, John Ludlam, Frank Woolrych

2. Minutes of October AGM noted.

3. Partnership report. Andrew Bibby gave a short report of the activities of the Partnership board since October. Three meetings had been held. Task groups to progress the work programme established by Vision 2020 last year were continuing their work. The visitor economy strategy group hoped to launch their draft strategy soon; a new 2015 tourist leaflet was also being planned. The Community Land Trust, established in September, was actively pursuing possibilities for affordable housing, at present primarily in Todmorden; the CLT remains interested in the possibility of rebuilding High Street. Market relocation: a number of meetings had been held. The transport group had been in contact with Calderdale re developments at the station. It had been agreed to defer further work on accessibility work until after May.

Thom Gunn had joined the management board, as a representative of young people's organisations (HB Junior Band). Polly Webber had stepped down from the board, and had been replaced until the AGM by Paul Forrest.

4. Huddersfield architectural students' project on Hebden bridge. A number of students and their supervisor were present at the meeting, and they briefly introduced their project.

5. Neighbourhood Plan. Jonathan Timbers explained the background to the Neighbourhood Plan, which was being progressed by the town council in partnership with the four rural parishes. The Neighbourhood Plan, once prepared and approved (by local referendum) would have a formal status as a planning document, under the CMBC Local Plan (under preparation, to replace the former Unified Development Plan) and within the National Planning Policy Framework. Neighbourhood Plans were optional, but was felt to be a valuable initiative locally. The working group, led by Cllr Timbers, was currently developing the consultation strategy it would follow. The plan itself would have to wait until after Calderdale's Local Plan was adopted, so would therefore not be completed until (hopefully) 2016-17. Cllr Timbers said that initial consultation work would commence during 2015.

6. Valley Road development. Bob Deacon explained the background to this. The Partnership's view was that a holistic approach to developing the old fire station, market square and (ideally) the BT building was to be preferred, but we were limited by the fact that the fire station site had been acquired by commercial developers, who naturally were looking for a commercial return on their investment. A meeting had been held with the developers who had expressed their preparedness if appropriate to discuss possibilities further with Calderdale and the Partnership. However, there was a right to appeal against the rejection of the Sainsbury's application; the time limit would expire next month. Bob Deacon said that among initial ideas suggested were: car parking, open space, affordable housing, youth centre, gallery, offices. The anti-Sainsbury group were calling a meeting on Feb 28, when further ideas might emerge.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- Retail creep up Valley Rd was potentially damaging to existing shopping areas (eg Market St) and should be resisted. No more shops!
- Need to build legal arguments for use in any appeal
- Important to remember that planning rejection had been on highways grounds.
- Need to identify and focus on the constraints of the site
- One idea might be a hotel
- One idea might be a tourist attraction: butterfly house, museum-heritage hub
- Parking was a pressing concern, particularly for retailers
- Parking could be put across whole site, with buildings above, or below
- Significant challenges in making parking commercially viable; need to maintain parking but find other robust income streams
- Central St also needs attention
- Possibility of innovative Community Right to Build initiative?

Following the discussion, a task group was established to develop an alternative vision for the site which would be commercially viable with the following members: Bob Deacon (convenor), Anthony Rae, Jonathan Timbers, Janet Battye, Stephen Curry, Hilary Chadwick. Other members would be sought at the Feb 28 meeting. First meeting to be held in March.

7. AOB

Val Cryne drew attention to the problem of the broken down Nisa lorry in Albert Street the previous Thursday. It was an example of the problems which could come from large delivery lorries trying to negotiate narrow HB streets.