

ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Tuesday, 10 November 2015 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr D.E. Clifford (Chairman)
Cllr Sophia Choudhary (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr M.S. Choudhary
Cllr Sue Dibble
Cllr D.S. Gladstone
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr J.J. Preece
Cllr L.A. Taylor

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor David Welch.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th September, 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

15. MARKETS

The Panel received a presentation from Mr. John Trusler, Principal Engineer, on progress with the Farnborough and Aldershot markets. The Panel also welcomed Mr. Peter Amies, Head of Community and Environment to the meeting.

Mr. Trusler explained that, in December, 2014, the Cabinet had approved a review of the operating arrangements for the existing markets and car boot sales in Rushmoor. In January 2015, Cabinet had considered the outcomes of the review and supported the recommendations that the Council should bring the operation of the markets and car boot sales 'in-house'.

Subsequently, during January and February of 2015, a small team of Officers from a range of services across the Council had developed the new business. Mr. Trusler reported that, although timelines had been tight and this had been a new way of working for the team, all deadlines had been met and in February, 2015 a new Market Manager, Claire Farrow, had been appointed. Mr. Trusler reported that the Farnborough Tuesday market had successfully opened on 3rd March, 2015, which was thriving and very popular. In May, 2015 the Farnborough Sunday market had commenced and the Panel was informed that, whilst small in comparison to the Tuesday market, it was proving

popular with the public. In June, 2015 the Saturday market had commenced in Aldershot, and had played a role in supporting the VE Day celebrations. In August the official opening of the Aldershot market had taken place, in conjunction with celebrating the opening of the new look town centre. Finally, the Aldershot Thursday market was continuing to grow in popularity with both the traders and the public.

It was also reported that the Farnborough car boot sale was very popular with both buyers and sellers and a new pre-booking system had reduced queuing for sellers. Aldershot car boot had struggled to regain momentum, but had shown significant improvement in recent weeks.

With regard to the budget position, Mr. Trusler informed that Panel that the budget targets for the year of £295,000 would be achieved and would potentially provide a net additional sum of £97,000 after taking into account current operating costs and the lost income from the previous markets provider. The weekday markets were performing well, the weekend markets were still in development but continuing to grow. The Farnborough car boot was highly successful, with some changes having been made which had been well received. The Aldershot car boot was improving but would require some additional development. However, it was highlighted that the main aim had been to improve the vibrancy of the town centres.

The Panel suggested other ideas for themed markets, greater use of the gazebos, promotional ideas and the possibility of extending the operating hours for the Farnborough market. Mr. Trusler reported that future plans would include additional themed markets as well as the expansion of the Aldershot market. Other plans included the introduction of arts and crafts, the concentrated growth of the Aldershot car boot, a review of fees and charges and the introduction of new smart technology for issuing receipts and recording transactions.

The Panel congratulated Mr. Trusler on the success of the project and **NOTED** the presentation.

16. **ALDERSHOT REGENERATION - ALDERSHOT TOWN CENTRE PROSPECTUS CONSULTATION**

The Panel welcomed Ms. Louise Mansfield from Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners to the meeting to present the draft Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus, along with Mr. Keith Holland, Head of Planning.

Ms. Mansfield explained that the Aldershot Prospectus set out the Council's strategy for regeneration of the town centre. The document had been prepared following input from local stakeholders and the community and had been designed to draw on Aldershot's key assets, such as its history, changing demographics, current investment programmes, good rail and road connections and beautiful landscape setting. The Prospectus had been based on viable investment and development options and would also act as a

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), meaning it would be a material planning consideration for future planning applications in the town centre.

There were six key themes to the vision for the town centre:

1. Revitalisation of the town centre – the Council would welcome new retailers, support specialist retailers that provide an alternative offer to other centres and seek to bring homes, leisure and office uses into the centre to support shops.
2. Town Centre Living – would be promoted to meet the need for new homes from young professionals wishing to move to the area due to the relatively affordable homes. The properties would cater for young people starting out, families and older people wishing to downsize.
3. A family-friendly town centre – the Council would seek to enhance this with additional activities such as town centre leisure facilities and town centre spaces.
4. An improved cultural offer – the Council was reviewing opportunities such as the transformation of the Princes Hall and the extension of the successful events programme in the town.
5. Investing in streets and spaces – following on from the Activation Aldershot programme, further investment priorities had been identified to create a central public space for Aldershot and to improve entrances into the town centre.
6. Affirming the Victorian heritage – the Council would commit to maintaining and enhancing the town's Victorian heritage and buildings in order to complement new buildings in the town centre.

The Prospectus set out a detailed Masterplan for the key development and refurbishment opportunities in the town. Sites identified included the Galleries site, the Union Street group of buildings, the Rail Station area, and the area around Princes Hall, including the refurbishment of the theatre.

It was reported that from 30th September, wider consultation had been taking place on the Prospectus which was due to end on 11th November, 2015. It was reported that a number of themes had emerged in the feedback received so far which focussed on:

- the lack of shops/major quality retailers in the town, including the need for a large 'anchor' store;
- rents being too high;
- parking fees;
- redevelopment of the Galleries should be a priority;
- support for the redevelopment of Princes Hall and the Police Station as well as the railway station;

- strong support for recognising the Victorian heritage.

The Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD contained a series of projects that would shape the centre over the next fifteen to twenty years and beyond. It was intended to be visionary, yet flexible to ensure that it could meet changes in circumstances, especially economic and property related.

With regard to making it happen, it was highlighted that town centres were challenging development environments, particularly so with the gradual decline in retail. Arguably, many town centres were undergoing a revolution rather than evolution. This applied more so to Aldershot town centre where some sites were particularly complex.

It was stressed, that the Council's ownership in the key areas was limited and the Council was therefore not in a position to deliver the proposals set out in the Prospectus alone. However, there was a strong case for considerable strategic intervention by the Council to achieve the aims of the Masterplan. The Panel was assured that the Council would use its powers and resources in a proactive way where necessary to enable development and investment in the town through de-risking opportunities, for example site assembly and securing SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) and funding. It was also proposed that the Council could look at the acquisition of strategic interests in the town. However, it was acknowledged that there was unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' mechanism for projects with delivery and funding mechanisms being provided by the public sector, private sector and public/private partnerships.

The Panel discussed the Prospectus and, overall was very enthusiastic about the ideas in the document. The Panel discussed the viability of the projects and highlighted the pressing need to attract retailers in order to ensure that the town centre would be an attractive destination for residents of the Wellesley development. The Panel was informed that the document would be used as a marketing tool to help encourage investment.

Following discussion on the major issues raised in the Prospectus the Panel **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The old Aldershot Town Hall was a significant building which deserved priority to emphasise its role in the development of Aldershot.
2. Good quality family living in the town centre was vital (including good quality new builds and conversions).
3. Princes Hall – its location was supported but its size and capacity should be expanded.
4. The principle of having a good town square was endorsed but the Panel wanted to see a well-defined and well-framed town square irrespective of its location.

5. The emphasis on the town's Victorian heritage and architecture was endorsed and it was felt that this should have prominence in the document and should be promoted, protected, enhanced and preserved.
6. Redundant sites on Windsor Way should be linked more to the Railway Station development in the document.
7. A Heritage Trail was considered an excellent idea and should be referenced in the document. It was suggested that this could be enhanced through the use of good public art (not forgetting the military).
8. the wording of the 'Making it Happen' section should be reviewed to emphasise the Council's role in working with private landowners.

It was explained that the Panel's recommendations, together with feedback from the wider consultation would be incorporated into the proposed Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus Supplementary Planning Document. The document would be presented to Cabinet for consideration in due course.

The Panel **NOTED** the presentation and **ENDORSED** the submission of the proposed Supplementary Planning Document and its recommendation to the Cabinet.

17. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel **NOTED** the current work programme.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

CLLR D.E. CLIFFORD (CHAIRMAN)
