

Axminster Renewal Forum Meeting

14.45, 11 October 2023

Meeting Notes

In attendance:

Cllr Paul Hayward, EDDC (Chair); Cllr Matt Hall, EDDC Portfolio Holder, Economy; Cllr Jill Farrow, Mayor, Axminster Town Council; Jane Rockett, Axminster Chamber of Commerce; Keir Duffin, DCC Economy Service; Alison Hayward, Project Manager, PAC, EDDC

Apologies:

- Cllr Nick Hookway
- Cllr Sarah Jackson
- Cllr Simon Smith
- Josh Dutfield
- Barrie Hedges

3. Purpose of Meeting. - Discussion.

There was a discussion relating to the **Gate to Plate event** which had reportedly attracted an estimated 7000 people on the weekend of 7 October. Some businesses have expressed concerns but in general there has been positive feedback. The Town Council will be discussing this in more detail at their forthcoming meeting.

Principally, the purpose of these meetings is to **support the delivery of projects from the Axminster Renewal Strategy** which had been completed earlier in 2023. List of projects with Lead Stakeholders identified. Need to ensure that the meetings are of value to members.

The Councils role (applies to any of the 3 councils)

- Could be Lead Stakeholder for some projects.
- Signposting other organisations where they are the Lead Stakeholder. Maybe enabling, facilitating where possible – e.g licence/lease agreements for use of land.
- Ensuring proper governance of projects where there is involvement of public assets, of financial support, directly or indirectly.
- Fair and transparent processes for all. Marketing opportunities, procurement.
- Protect the various councils' position's regarding risk, e.g. health and safety matters where use of different council land.

The Renewal Strategy has identified a list of projects and it is this that will be monitored and evaluated.

4. E-bikes.

Following the failure of the Co-Bikes company, the Town Council has had discussion with Beryl Bikes that operates in Dorset. They want to provide 25 bikes but this would require £100k investment. The contribution from Axminster Town Council would therefore be £35000 (adding to the existing grant available). This is not affordable so the project remains on hold currently.

An alternative plan may be to consider E-bike docking stations for personally owned e-bikes, with a charging point and appropriate locking mechanism. Further research is required on this.

5. Websters Garage Site

The Planning application submitted in October 2022 by Hallmark Estates is still undetermined. The Council remains in contact with Hallmark to discuss their progress with developing the site.

6. Update on Regeneration Strategy Projects.

6.1 – Delivery of vocational skills training. The Chamber has been working with DCC on this. Cosmic has been providing training for businesses to support their on-line presence and marketing skills.

6.2 – Landlord Database. Axminster Property have updated their information. Josh to provide further details in relation to the Axminster Carports Properties tenancies. There has been some interest in the former River Cottage building regarding offering an empty unit for pop-up shops, however the size of this is probably prohibitive.

6.3 - see above

6.4 - The Local Plan is being progressed by EDDC, with employment land allocations as appropriate.

6.5 - A BID will not be progressed.

7.1 - There is no further work on a market location.

7.2 - Websters. See above

7.4. More limited numbers of vacant units now. They tend to be of poorer quality condition or larger.

7.5 - Town Council is considering the marketing/branding of the town. This is at the very local level.

7.6. – Signs are approved and on order.

8. - Transport and Accessibility. No further progress from DCC on this currently. Remains an issue for the town.

7. A.O.B.

Project suggestions:

There was a discussion in relation to a number of ideas put forward by Josh Dutfield:

- In-shore wind, Town Council Climate levy fund. Objective- clean energy and create a fund for the TC.
- Funding of the Town Centre regeneration- A local 'Right to Buy' Scheme for local retailers. Helping to raise funds for the scheme, create a vibrant TC, give more control locally and re-risk the scheme.
- Relief Road (1)- a new route?
- Relief Road (2)- raise funds for the road in the long term, by the TC installing some kind of clean air zone. This would tax only large heavy vehicles. Locally businesses can seek an exception. Worst case, may divert the worst traffic away?
- As a general policy, I think adopting the Lyme Regis TC model, ie getting funds in it to be controlled locally / increase its influence- should be an adopted strategy of the Regeneration Strategy.

These were not considered to be within the resources of the Group to consider further at this time, but can be discussed at a future meeting.

POST MEETING – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Funding Sources.

ACED - Arts & Culture East Devon.

- See website: www.aced.org.uk See details of the **Creative East Devon Fund**, part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. **Applications by 15 November.**
- ACED newsletter, where information is shared on details of future events and training opportunities: [East Devon District Council - ACED Newsletter sign up \(govdelivery.com\)](http://govdelivery.com)
- You can view upcoming events here: [Events | Arts and Culture East Devon \(aced.org.uk\)](http://www.aced.org.uk)

DCC Funding support and advice

- The County Council has a small amount of **Locality Funding** available (to be confirmed, but likely available via Cllr Ian Hall)
- **Devon County Council** - sign up for email bulletin with details of various funding opportunities: jasmine.jones@devon.gov.uk