

Future Oswestry Group

Notes of meeting held 9:30am-11:30am Thursday 11th April 2024 at Oswestry Guildhall

Partners	Oswestry Town Council (OTC)	Shropshire Council (SC)	Oswestry BID	Community Representatives
Welcome and apologies	<p>Cllr Olly Rose Cllr Duncan Kerr Arren Roberts</p>	<p>Cllr Chris Schofield Cllr Rob Macey Joe Bubb Sam Jones Rosie Corner Steve Law</p> <p>Apologies: Andy Wigley</p>	<p>Tim Morris Adele Nightingale</p>	<p>Grum Mitchell</p>
Welcome to Grum Mitchell, the new Community Representative.				
1. Notes of the last meeting	The notes of the last meeting were agreed.			
2. Declarations of interest	None.			
3. Governance	<p><i>The Chair has rotated to Cllr Rob Macey (Shropshire Council).</i></p> <p><i>Final draft of Memorandum of Understanding is complete and will be circulated to member organisations for final checking and then sign off.</i></p>			
4. Update from Shropshire Council's Property and Development Team	<p><i>Verbal update from Steve Law:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mile End Services <i>Travelodge have put together a tarmac resurfacing proposal which is going to their board for approval later this month.</i> • Cambrian Railway Building <i>Successful internal consultation session took place earlier this week. Funding secured to progress with stabilisation works to the roof and corbels. External stakeholders' event will take place next week with key partners in attendance.</i> <i>Email from Chirk Swifts and House Martins requesting swift boxes has been sent to Andy Wilde (SC).</i> • Castle View <i>Package of work is taking place to facilitate changes to Castle View to put it in the best possible position to secure tenants while retaining a small area for SC use.</i> <i>Members discussed the relocation of the TIC and any opportunities for support to Oswestry Borderland Tourism.</i> • Castle Court <i>Feasibility and scoping work is underway and the budget for this work is being protected. Soft market testing for potential occupants met with positive interest.</i> • The Centre <i>Transfer to OTC is nearing completion.</i> 			
5. Project priorities	<p><i>Verbal update from Joe Bubb:</i></p> <p><i>Cambrian Gateway work is ongoing to consider previous studies undertaken including Future Oswestry Plan and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).</i></p>			

<p>6. Update from Oswestry Town Council</p>	<p><i>Verbal update from Arren Roberts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Wall public toilets <i>Refurbishment of the toilets on English Walls and associated landscaping will complete next week. Will include Changing Places and office accommodation.</i> • Llwyd Mansion <i>OTC are continuing to work on the business case. Key issue is understanding the extent of the work needed to accommodate future uses e.g. accommodation on the top floor. Buttress (architecture firm) are calculating costs and OTC Members will decide on a programme of works moving forward. An Enterprise Heritage Grant Expression of Interest is going to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Messaging needs to be consistent that this will be a long-term project. Members noted the installation of the information boards on the hoardings and discussed potential for more events in Llwyd Mansion over the summer.</i> • The Cross <i>One year on from the accident which destroyed the cross a local company has started works. There will be a press release next week providing an update.</i> • The Centre <i>OTC is keen to conclude negotiations with SC. OTC is working with future partners OzNosh and TNSFC Foundation to secure future uses. Major work required to repair roof.</i> • Breathing New Life Into Empty Buildings <i>Grants of up to £5,000 are now available for businesses moving into buildings which have been empty for at least 6 months.</i> • Oswestry Indoor Market <i>Having secured funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), OTC is working alongside Wem Town Council to improve the indoor market. Works include painting, a new mural, indoor and outdoor lights, a new clock and new internal flooring.</i> • Bus Shelters <i>OTC is upgrading the bus shelters on Black Gate Street and outside the Post Office on Willow Street. A consultation with young people was well received and provided insights on issues for people moving around the town.</i> • Dial-a-Ride Service <i>Qube (Oswestry Community Action) is currently providing a Dial-a-Ride service. OTC are currently in discussions with them about their capacity to provide a free travel service on a Saturday and what this would cost. Members discussed options for new premises for QUBE, including the possibility of Castle Court or the Cambrian Building.</i> • Cinema offer in Oswestry <i>Kinoculture is closing in April. OTC were keen to find a way to support them moving forward but the decision is now final. Members discussed alternative venues for a small-scale cinema in Oswestry.</i> <p>Memorial Hall is seeking funding for new seating; officers suggested Vibrant Shropshire and Freedom Fibre's Freedom Fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms <i>A press release will come out next week providing an update on the English Walls toilets and repairs to the Cross and to the wall and railings on Beatrice Street.</i>
<p>7. Update from Oswestry BID</p>	<p><i>Verbal update from Adele Nightingale:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business directories <i>Updated business directory for the Industrial Estate is being publicised currently and an updated town centre directory will be released and publicised next month.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Rangers The Street Ranger team has been handing out Smartwater (a forensic property marking solution) to small businesses. A new Street Ranger is in post and police reporting structures are in place. Feedback is positive. All interactions with businesses are being logged – 69 businesses had interactions with Street Rangers last week. Street Rangers are visiting businesses on the outskirts of town once a month. Both the Oswestry and Shrewsbury BIDs are seeking more funding for their Street Ranger teams. • Street Circus This event took place for the third time on the 30th March. Well received and the BID board are keen to book this event for next year. • Oswestry Balloon Carnival BID are working with OTC on plans for this year’s festival. • Weddings in Oswestry The BID website will host a dedicate page with links to wedding-related businesses. Exploring potential to negotiate a lower wedding licence fee for venues with only one room. • Oswestry in Bloom BID has secured funding for 10 out of 14 of the Oswestry in Bloom awards. BID working with SC, Keir and Oswestry in Bloom to site and plant up planters left over from Church Street near English Walls toilets and the bin store. GM raised issue of securing additional prize funding before the publicity deadline. • Industrial Estate New banners are now in place. • Discussion Members discussed negative impact of broken shop windows and poor-quality shopfront design and finishing. Particular issue with prominent buildings within the Conservation Area, especially considering the legacy of raised design standards which has come out of the HSHAZ project. Members discussed the HGV park. A long lease is now in place with Oswestry Livestock Auctions. BID keen for SC to extend double yellow lines on Glovers Meadow as HGVs are very disruptive to businesses. AN is speaking to Keir about costs for a traffic engineer and drawings. Members discussed the need for a dedicated coach park. Members discussed the proliferation a A-boards on Church Street. The problem is exacerbated on Friday mornings during bin collections. Opportunity for joint working between SC and OTC to manage and enforce pavement licenses for A-boards.
<p>4. Update from Shropshire Council</p>	<p><i>Update from Joe Bubb:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage at The Range Car Park GM noted that this car park is still listed in TIC docs as being long stay. AR and AN agreed that subject to SC permission, OTC and BID would look to remove the sign. • Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) JB: Feasibility study has been undertaken by WSP on behalf of SC. This has examined routes around the town centre identified by the LCWIP consultation. This will be shared with FOG members to discuss pros and cons of options, and implications in terms of traffic flow/potential loss of car parking spaces etc. • Railway link to Gobowen Department of Transport (DfT) have received a price and programme from Network Rail. They are currently discussing how the initial stage of works can be shortened to give an idea of the most viable option. Once agreed, DfT will set a date to review the plans, look at some of the key assumptions and agree how some of the work completed to date by colleagues at

	<p><i>Cambrian Railways can be integrated and built upon. This stakeholders meeting will include SC, OTC, BID, Cambrian Railway and others.</i></p> <p><i>Following the stakeholders meeting, a representative of the Railway Trust will be invited to a future FOG meeting.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road signs <p>Members discussed potentially phasing this work i.e. focusing on removing redundant signs and cleaning signs as the first phase. BID's has survey data on the condition of existing signs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing <p>JB reported that the SC Licensing Team would categorise a pop-up stall promoting individual BID member businesses as street trading, which is prohibited within Oswestry Town Centre following the review of SC's Street Trading Policy (updated 2022).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents Parking Areas <p>DK provided an update on the Oswestry Parking Review which is currently on hold and will be undertaken by the SC Infrastructure team.</p> <p>GM raised issue of local confusion over the timing and arrangements for the School Streets project at Woodside this month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival Square <p>AN keen for a final response from SC on transferring Festival Square. Feasibility and design work is complete and this would allow BID to build a business case.</p>
<p>8. High Street Heritage Action Zone</p>	<p><i>Verbal update from Sam Jones:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Oswestry HSHAZ Project was officially completed on 31st March. A leaflet detailing all of the project successes has been published.</i> • <i>Cultural Connections (formerly the Cultural Consortium) has funding for another 12 months. The ARTefacts project will be running again to coincide with the 2024 Heritage Open Days (theme: Routes - Networks - Connections). Upcoming study visits to Walsall and Shrewsbury Arts Trail.</i> • <i>Villages Project launched. Will cover five villages near Oswestry, including one in Wales. Will culminate in a collective exhibition at Love Oswestry Festival 2025.</i> • <i>The Shopfront Design Guide is complete and going to Full Council. Next step is publicising and potentially a Street Furniture Design Guide.</i> • <i>SJ is now SC's Heritage Regeneration Officer. She will continue to be involved with Llwyd Mansion and the Regal/BWise building. SJ thanked FOG for being a challenging friend throughout the HSHAZ project. Historic England is keen to continue to work with Oswestry following the success of the project.</i>
<p>9. Update from Comms</p>	<p>Could you be the next Future Oswestry community representative? - Shropshire Council Newsroom</p> <p>Free business boost event comes to Oswestry and north Shropshire - Shropshire Council Newsroom</p> <p>Project to restore Oswestry's Cambrian Railway building approved - Shropshire Council Newsroom</p> <p>Members discussed communicating FOG priorities. Agreed that collective work is focused on the Cambrian Gateway which includes the bus station and Wilfred Owen Park. Opportunity to</p>

	publicise joint working outcomes such as fewer empty shops and progress on reviewing signage throughout the town.
10. Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Llywd Mansion engagement event <p><i>SJ: Engagement event attracted over 500 people over 3 days. People were generally supportive of the TIC and a museum being there but would also like to see a tearoom or sale of Oswestry local goods for an ongoing connection to the building. People were understanding of the need for revenue generation to support the building such as office accommodation.</i></p> <p>Action - Formal meeting with North Shropshire MP around FOG to be considered as a future agenda item.</p>
11. Date of next meeting and agenda items	<p>Thursday 13th June 2024. Apologies from Joe Bubb.</p> <p>Topics for future discussion: Next meeting - Setting FOG objectives (and communications focus) for the coming year</p> <p>Future topic - Oswestry's nighttime offer.</p>