

Future Oswestry Group

Notes of meeting held online 9:30am-11:30am Thursday 8th February 2024

Partners	Oswestry Town Council (OTC)	Shropshire Council (SC)	Oswestry BID	Community Representatives
Welcome and apologies	Cllr Duncan Kerr Cllr Olly Rose Arren Roberts	Cllr Chris Schofield Cllr Rob Macey Andy Wigley Joe Bubb Sam Jones Eloise Allen Rose Dovey Apologies from Rosie Corner	Adele Nightingale Lindsey Pierce Apologies from Tim Morris	Craig Marston Peter Lloyd
1. Notes of the last meeting	Agreed			
2. Declarations of interest	None received			
3. Governance	<p>Update from Joe Bubb:</p> <p><i>Community Representative advert was sent out via key networks on 31st January 2024, and promoted via social media and local communications. The deadline for the application form is Monday 4th March by 5.00pm.</i></p> <p><i>Following the review of submissions received, interviews will be held with Future Oswestry Members in March to assess the applicant's knowledge of and established links with existing local community groups and stakeholders and consider the applicant's skillset or experience which could offer added benefit to the work of the Future Oswestry group.</i></p> <p><i>Following discussion around the best way to interview community volunteer candidates it was agreed that one representative from each organisation would do so.</i></p> <p><i>DK thanked CM and PL for their efforts in their roles and encouraged them to apply for the Community Representative vacancy currently advertised.</i></p> <p><i>Following a discussion on the appointment of the next chair, it was agreed that the chair will pass to Shropshire Council at the next meeting in April.</i></p>			
4. Project priorities	<p><i>JB - Following the Officers meeting held before Christmas, the Cambrian Gateway has been identified as a high priority, JB to report back at a future FOG meeting.</i></p> <p><i>AR – Opportunity identified to link Cambrian Gateway project to police intensive engagement work.</i></p>			
5. Update from Oswestry Town Council	<p>Verbal update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of The Centre: <i>OTC in negotiations with Shropshire Council and future partners around potential use. Oswestry Town Council committed to £250k repairs. Roof needs repairing</i> • Llywd Mansion: <i>Llywd Mansion is progressing really well. Purchase is secured, waiting for final engineering report. Buttress are the company doing the business case, scope of works required and options for future use.</i> 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty Property Fund: <i>In their budget OTC committed £20K per annum for an incentive scheme to breathe new life into empty properties. Grant criteria and details to be worked up.</i> • UKSPF funding for the Market Hall: <i>OTC have secured £100k to improve the indoor market, accessibility, and flooring. Demonstrates the importance of doing feasibility studies.</i> • English Walls Public Toilets – <i>contractors on site and progressing but hampered by wet weather, should be open by end of March. Public feedback has been really positive.</i> • Free bus travel on Saturday – <i>numbers increasing month on month, well received, not having an impact on car parking figures. OTC are looking to undertake improvements to the bus stops on Black Gate Street and at the Post Office.</i>
<p>6. Update from Oswestry BID</p>	<p>Action – AN to chase about the positioning of the 20mph marking and loading only markings on Cross Street.</p>
<p>7. High Street Heritage Action Zone</p>	<p><i>SJ: Metal items going in this week. One last application for the Dog and Bone which hopefully will get their award from Historic England this week. There are only 6 weeks left of the scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Love Oswestry festival is starting on Monday.</i></p> <p><i>Invites going out shortly for the celebration event on 20th March.</i></p> <p><i>SJ's post has been made permanent by Shropshire Council so will be available to support OTC moving forward and expand the project to other towns.</i></p> <p><i>CS passed on thanks from Wem councillor for the help they've received to set up a scheme.</i></p> <p><i>SJ will continue to have a role in Oswestry – looking at Llywd Mansion and the larger empty units in Oswestry.</i></p> <p><i>PL and RM highlighted SJ's pivotal role in making the HAZ successful.</i></p>
<p>8. Update from Shropshire Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property and Development Team <p><i>JB provided update from SL</i></p> <p><i>Castle View and Castle Court</i></p> <p><i>Work continues on the options for reconfiguration and the consolidation of staff with plans in development for moving staff from Castle Court and other SC venues into the Castle View site. This includes planned use of the building by teams and their clients requiring an accessible entrance.</i></p> <p><i>Steve has asked me to seek the views of FOG on the suggestion of dividing the entrance to enable the TIC to remain in the entrance area, which will require reconfiguration costs to enable access and the installation of a roller shutter to protect the TIC equipment and materials. Previously an offer to provide a space within the library had been put forward.</i></p> <p><i>SL asked for FOG member views on possible re-location the tourist information office. The issue of storing merchandise in the library was seen to be an issue.</i></p>

Work is ongoing to look at the potential to reconfigure the Castle Court space for commercial use.

- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Project (LCWIP)

RD – feasibility cycle study underway funded through UKSPF. WSP have done a SWOT analysis on each of the corridors which follows Department of Transport's process to prepare pipeline schemes. WSP found that there were lots of constraints e.g. road width, houses without off street parking. WSP are drawing up designs for Gobowen Road given the constraints.

Next steps – WSP drawing up concept designs for Gobowen Road and Oswald Road. Running them through Active Travel England guidance. Going to have an event to share the concepts with partners to gain feedback. Funding is not available at present, but the feasibility will allow Oswestry to be in the pipeline to be put forward to Active Travel in the future.

- Cambrian Building

The Council has been awarded £630,000 from the UKSPF fund to repair the exterior of the building, including to make safe the ornate corbels, re-slate the roof and repaint the doors and windows. This was dependent on Shropshire Council providing 30% match funding and on 17th January the Cabinet approved this funding making a total report budget of £900,000. The tenders for this work are being prepared and the aim is to complete these external repairs by March 2026.

In parallel, the Council has just completed a competitive tender exercise to appoint Architects to complete a Conservation Management Plan, and detailed survey and repair plan for the inside of the building. This work will commence in February 2024 and will run for approximately 6 months after which we will be preparing a business case to complete these last remaining repairs and any necessary adaptations to bring the building back into productive use. This work will include consultation with the building's stakeholders including the Cambrian Heritage Railway, Oswestry BID and Town Council.

Action – CS to share emails from Swift group from Chirk asking for swift boxes to be put up with AW so he can explore request.

- Railway link to Gobowen

JB - The Council continue to liaise with the Department of Transport (DfT) regarding the Gobowen to Oswestry Railway project. DfT has confirmed that Network Rail (NR) should have a price / programme for the next stage of works over the coming week. DfT will then review this with NR prior to setting up the next review meeting with key partners to go through the detail. This will be the opportunity to review the plans, look at some of the key assumptions and agree how some of the work completed to date by colleagues at Cambrian Railways can be integrated and built upon.

Potential for a cycleway or pedestrian route alongside railway was raised. JB is hoping that all options will be considered as the project goes through the stages of development.

Action – JB to invite Cambrian Railway representative to a future FOG meeting once there has been an update from the DfT and Network Rail.

Action - AN to re-circulate the strategic outline business case.

- Oswestry Innovation Park

The preparations for the proposed Innovation Park are progressing. Shropshire Council is currently out to tender for a contractor to undertake the infrastructure works such as the site roads and incoming utilities, which will enable the disposal of the whole site. It is anticipated that the contract for the infrastructure will be awarded and works start on site from spring 2024. The plans are to bring forward serviced employment land plots from early 2025, subject to the contracting arrangements agreed.

The demand and interest for plots and enquiries continue to be logged, and the remaining plots will all be offered on the open market once the infrastructure contracts have been placed. Shropshire Council has appointed Halls to market. Interested parties can contact James Evans at Halls directly to discuss their interest and requirements.

JB is looking into the bridge naming process and is being supported by the Research Group on potential names for the planned roads within the Innovation Park.

- Mile End Services

SC Estates team met with Travelodge’s surveyor for the site before Christmas. Travelodge provided assurances that they are looking at a tarmacking investment next year and were looking into patchwork repairs in the meantime for any areas requiring immediate work. This commitment will be followed up by the Estates Team for further details and likely timescales.

AN raised concerns around litter.

Action - JB to share concerns with SL

- Road signs

National Highways has been approached about the process and likely costs for amendments to the Brown Signs on the A5 and A483. A response is still outstanding.

DK – The Range car park is signed as a public car park and the incorrect signage has led to parking fines being issued.

Action - AN to email Shropshire Council highways to get sign updated.

The 10 highlighted temporary signs have been removed. Re maintenance of damaged signs / removal of duplicated sign – these have been added to the maintenance programme; however it is anticipated that the in-house team will be busy with defect repairs and possibly winter maintenance activities.

DK – OTC likely to be happy to be agents for the road signs work.

Action - JB – speak to Andy about OTC getting permission to change signs

	<p><i>Regarding temporary road signs, OR shared issue raised by a sight and access group that from the temporary signs are not visible from behind. Requested if there could be solution such as a bright sticker on the back of signs.</i></p> <p>Action - JB – ask someone from Andy Wilde’s team to attend next meeting about OTC becoming agents and sticker on back of signs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing <p><i>AN – BID want to take a space on Festival Square to offer it to businesses to have a pop up to promote their goods/services, not to sell anything at this point.</i></p> <p>Action - JB to set a meeting up with the licensing team and Zoe to progress the idea.</p>
<p>9. Update from Comms</p>	<p>A number of communications were noted as detailed with the agenda</p>
<p>10. Engagement</p>	<p><i>Engagement opportunity on the options for Llywd Mansion will be held on 16th and 17th February.</i></p> <p><i>Formal meeting with North Shropshire MP around FOG to be considered as a future agenda item.</i></p>
<p>11. Date of next meeting and agenda items</p>	<p>Thursday 11th April 2024</p>