



Minutes of meeting of joint working party with Prudhoe Town Council on future of town centre held at Spetchells Centre on Tuesday 5th March at 7pm

Present: Cty Cllr Anne Dale, Elizabeth Evans, Cllr Tracy Gilmour, George Hepburn, Jill Keeler, Cllr Jennifer McGee, Mark O'Connor, , Cty Cllr Gordon Stewart, William Thompson, Iain Watt,

Guests: Anne Lawson, Senior Programme Officer (Town Regeneration) and Neil Quinn, Community Regeneration Officer

Apologies: Doreen Elwell, Paul SN

1 Chair: Tracy chaired the meeting in Doreen's absence

2 Minutes of meeting held on 28th January were agreed.

4 Matters arising : Minute 3 (iii) George explained that he had not invited Colin Barnes to join the group or attend this meeting in accordance with the minute to invite him to a future meeting.

5 Support from Northumberland County Council

Anne explained that the County Council was inviting towns to submit plans to the 'Town Investment Programme' for possible future support. In order to do so Prudhoe would need to establish:

- What it wanted to do?
- Where it wanted to be next?
- How it saw the town centre in 10 years time?

Anne said that Prudhoe was doing well compared to other similar towns in Northumberland. It had a good range of independent shops, almost full occupancy and good parking. The lack of national chain stores, which were now closing down on other high streets had turned into an advantage for Prudhoe.

She encouraged the group to develop a strategy that was achievable and imaginative for the town centre. There was no deadline to submit proposals to the 'Town Investment Programme'.

6 Priorities and work plan for the working party

There was a wide ranging discussion following Anne's presentation in the following areas:

i Cosmetics:

There was widespread support for hanging baskets on shop fronts. The Town Council was asked to facilitate this, with shop keepers present being willing to meet the costs of their display.

There was support for better signage welcoming visitors to Prudhoe at either end of Front Street and so defining the town centre.

ii Promotion:

There was much interest in better promoting the town centre on social media and in revamping Visit Prudhoe.

There was also interest in print to show whereabouts of different shops in a form that could be widely circulated. Word of mouth recommendations were also thought to be important.

iii Traffic management:

The resurfacing of Front Street was warmly welcomed.

Everyone agreed that traffic calming measures were needed and Cllr Stewart was asked to arrange a 20mph speed limit on Front Street to make Front Street a safer place and more appealing venue for shopping and leisure activities.

It was suggested that welcome to Prudhoe signage could be designed by school children and exhort drivers to slow down.

Some present thought that parking should be extended and improved.

iv) Longer term strategy :

If national trends and forecasts could be relied on, it was agreed that we should anticipate and plan for:

- Increased leisure opportunities on Front Street, both day time and evening and less traditional retail.
- More community use of shop fronts, for example by 'mums with buggies' and possibly through a redevelopment of East Centre.
- Better use of space 'above the shops' for offices and accommodation.

v) Other points raised

- That Prudhoe should market itself as a destination
- That Front Street would need to compete with the Low Prudhoe development
- That an agreed plan with " 4-5 big ideas" was required and that outside advice might be needed.

7 Next steps

- George offered to draft the ideas put forward at this meeting into an action plan for the working party to consider. Other shop keepers and stakeholders would then be consulted.
- Colin Barnes from Northumberland would be invited to the next meeting to explain NE's plans for the town centre.
- George and Tracy would seek a meeting with Mr Dhillon who owns many of the shops on the north side of Front Street.

8 Date of next meeting: Tuesday 2nd April 7pm at Spetchells Centre