



# Thirsk Regeneration Initiative

A MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE PROGRAMME

## Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday 29th April 2009

7.00pm at 49b Market Place, Thirsk

## Minutes

### Present

Peter Walker (Chair); Jan Marshall; Peter Cole; Ellen Storm; Alison Scurrah; Alison Cramb; Mark Terry; Freda Roberts; Malcolm Warne; Dave McGloin & Julie Chandler.

### Apologies

Tony Jordan; Gareth Dadd; Richard Rowling; Bill Austin; Mark Haynes; Linda Gibbon & John Potter.

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### 1. Welcome & Introductions

Peter welcomed Julie Chandler (Manager - the York & North Yorkshire Employment Skills Partnership), Dave McGloin (Head of Service – Regeneration at HDC) and Malcolm Warne (Editor – the Darlington & Stockton Times.)

### 2. The Role of the York & North Yorkshire Employment Skills Partnership

Julie described the purpose of the York & North Yorkshire Employment Skills Partnership (YNYESP) which is to 'lead and champion the skills agenda for the sub region, promoting engagement with employers to build business driven demand for skills in order to support the sub region's economy and improve aspirations and opportunities for all'. The aim of the partnership is to:

- maintain and develop as the focus of action the sub regional priorities for skills of raising aspirations, engaging employers in renewing skills and sustaining the high level knowledge base for competitiveness.
- champion skills within the wider partnership structures in the sub region.
- develop and ensure the delivery of an integrated employment and skills strategy.

Julie confirmed that the partnership is keen to engage with key organisations to identify 'critical issues' across Hambleton (strengths and weaknesses of local economic significance) and welcome input from TRI members. Concerns were expressed over existing vocational provision across Thirsk and the rationale behind decisions taken by the 14-19 Curriculum Task Group.

**Action:** Peter C. to circulate the briefing papers presented by Julie. Peter W. & Julie to consider gaps in existing vocational provision across Thirsk including the provision of Diploma's at Thirsk School. All members to forward comments and/or critical issues to Peter C. for consideration by the YNYESP.

### 3. Minutes of the Last Meeting held Wednesday 25th March 2009

Agreed as a true record thereof.

### 4. Actions & Matters Arising

- Peter W. raised the issue of discretionary business rate relief at the recent Thirsk Area Forum and has been in discussion with Arthur Barker and Phil Morton. Following these discussions it was agreed that a press release be circulated to promote the scheme to the wider business community. Peter welcomed the speed of the Council's response to the questions raised at the recent Area Forum.
- Peter confirmed HDC's decision to pay invoices much quicker, with a target turnaround time of 20 days. It is hoped that this will be reduced further.
- It is understood that further consultation will be undertaken by HDC before a decision is taken on the future of Millgate Toilets.
- It was noted that the issues over land ownership in the Sensory Gardens have yet to be resolved. It was agreed that the land ownership and planning issues should be addressed as a priority. **Action:** Dave to contact HDC Legal and Planning teams to seek a resolution. Mark to follow up with Jan on progress.
- Peter W. confirmed that following a discussion held with Assistant Chief Constable Adam Briggs to clarify the role of the Safer Thirsk Group it is anticipated that the new operational arrangements and recent appointments should help overcome resourcing issues identified by the Group.
- Jan confirmed that Thirsk Town Council has agreed to pay for a subscription to the Yorkshire Society.

### 5. Project Update

#### • The Yorkshire Comedy Festival

Peter W. confirmed that progress is being made to arrange bookings, venues and acts. The domain name [www.yorkshirecomedyfestival.org.uk](http://www.yorkshirecomedyfestival.org.uk) has been purchased and members were given the opportunity to agree the preferred design for the artwork ('The Yorkshire Comedy Festival: For Laughs Great and Small'.) Peter W. is seeking support from local businesses to underwrite the event and members agreed that TRI reserves could be used to support the event if required. Jan confirmed that the Ritz Cinema is to select suitable comedy films for screening during the week and has recently purchased staging to allow the venue to be used for stand-up performances. A meeting of those organisations willing to support the event is to be held in May to which TRI members will be invited **Action:** Peter C. to check with NYCC Highways regarding the use and siting of banners to publicise the event.

## • Thirsk Safe Group

Peter C. confirmed that a meeting is to be held on Wednesday 6th May with Bill Austin, Sgnt. Frances Hannan and Geoff Lodge to agree the format for a meeting to discuss the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NWS). The meeting will provide NWS Co-ordinators with an opportunity to raise any concerns over the existing scheme and suggest ways in which improvements can be made.

## 6. The TRI Constitution

It was agreed that whilst membership of TRI has changed since its inception in 2001 the Constitution reflects current membership and representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors. It was agreed that no amendments to the current Constitution are required. **Action:** Dave to confirm TRI membership of a HDC Cabinet Member after the Cabinet AGM in May.

## 7. Finance Report

Alison confirmed that there has been no income or expenditure since the last meeting and that TRI has approximately £5k in reserves.

## 8. Meetings & Correspondence

- Peter W. reported on the business meeting held at Aspire on Wednesday 22nd April attended both by local businesses and Officers of the District Council. Peter confirmed that HDC were exploring options for implementing a 3 week 'window' prior to Christmas when parking charges will not be enforced. It was noted that those businesses in the retail sector were coping with the economic downturn and were keen to deliver a positive message. **Action:** Peter W. and Malcolm to draft a press release to this effect
- Peter C. circulated a briefing paper drafted by Beth Carss which outlines the current issues at Thirsk Station (accessibility, especially for the elderly and disabled, signage at the station and taxi and bus links into the town centre) and which recommends action to be taken prior to the next meeting. **Action:** Mark & Beth to follow up.
- Peter C. circulated a proposal from Geraint for comment on Total-e TownTalk, an initiative which seeks to promote local businesses via the internet and other media. The initiative offers a website feature for each business, training and ongoing marketing support. For further details visit: [www.towntalk.co.uk/total-e](http://www.towntalk.co.uk/total-e). **Action:** TRI members to forward comments to Peter prior to the next meeting.

## 9. Any Other Business

- It was agreed that TRI endorse the Shoplocal scheme which has proved successful in other market towns across Hambleton. Malcolm confirmed that the initiative is to be rolled out in Thirsk. For further details visit: <http://www.shoplocalny.co.uk>
- Jan confirmed that the Hannah Packer Blue Plaque is to be unveiled at the end of May.
- Alison circulated details of the 'Fabulous Fifties' event being held in partnership with Rural Arts North Yorkshire at the Old Courthouse on the 12th May.

## 10. Dates for Future Meetings:

27th May

24th June

29th July

26th August (AGM)

23rd September

21st October

25th November

16th December