

Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday 21st January 2009

7.00pm

The Old Courthouse at Rural Arts North Yorkshire

Minutes

Present

Peter Walker (Chair); Ted Naisbitt; Jan Marshall; Cllr. Gareth Dadd; Peter Cole; Pauline Simpson; Linda Gibbon; Nicky Smith; Carolyn Mullins; Emily Thomas; Janet Watson; Freda Roberts; Mark Tolly & Janice McVay.

Apologies

Cllr. Ellen Storm; Alison Cramb; Ian Noble; Angela Hall; Bill Austin; Mark Haynes; Richard Rowling; Phil Bustard; Kathryn Chapman; Tony Jordan & John Potter.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Peter introduced Carolyn Mullins, Extended Schools Co-ordinator for the Thirsk area and Mark Tolly, owner of the Arabica Coffee Bar and Café.

2. Extended Schools Provision across Thirsk

Carolyn provided an overview of Extended Schools provision across Thirsk and the surrounding villages and described the 'core offer' which includes Childcare, Activities for Children, Parenting and Community Access. Extended Schools are arranged into 'clusters' to support families and young people aged 5-19 and work alongside Children's Centres and the Youth Service. The Extended Schools Service works in partnership with other organisations to improve the quality of provision in rural areas, to change the culture within schools and to ensure that projects are sustainable. Partners include NYCC Adult Learning Service, Thirsk Clock, the PCT and other voluntary sector organisations. Funding for the service has been secured until March 2010 and in some areas clusters have registered charity status.

Projects being undertaken across Thirsk include 'Playground Play,' whereby Lunchtime Supervisors at local primary schools have been given the opportunity to study towards an NVQ Level 2 in Playwork, extended breakfast clubs and the 154 Club. Carolyn confirmed that Parent Support Workers seek to encourage parental responsibility and that there has been a downturn in the number of young people accessing the service. It was suggested that this is due to the cost of some of the services on offer.

Action: Peter W. to forward Carolyn details of the Train To Gain initiative. Peter C. to circulate recent Extended Schools updates to TRI members.

3. Thirsk Market

Following discussion over the impact of Thirsk Market on the local economy it was agreed that TRI support initiatives to promote the Market, enhance its appearance and resolve issues of concern. These issues include the enforcement of operating guidelines, common signage, the parking of vans and the use of 'standardised' promotional materials. It was suggested that TRI undertake a consultation exercise with local people and market traders to canvas views of the market and identify actions for TRI. It was noted that recent articles contained errors over the days on which the market operates and the existence of a Thirsk Farmers Market. **Action:** Peter W. to contact John Proud regarding the management of the market. Peter C. to confirm whether written guidelines exist which determine how the market is managed.

4. **Minutes of the Last Meeting held Wednesday 17th December 2008**

Agreed as a true record thereof.

5. **Actions & Matters Arising**

Web Cam: Ted reported that the Directors of Joplings had reversed the decision to host the web cam and that an alternative site is being sought. Hawksworth Appliances was suggested a possible site. It was agreed that Mark & Ted liaise and report back to the group at the next meeting.

Baker's Alley: Janet reported that the Town Council's decision to relocate the archway feature had been taken following concerns over the cost of the original design. The new design is smaller, therefore less expensive, and forms part of the first phase of further ginnel enhancement work.

Hannah Packer Blue Plaque: Jan reported that the Town Council is to co-ordinate the unveiling of the Blue Plaque which will be sited on the wall of the Old Bank Chambers.

Learning & Skills: Peter reported that Julie Chandler, Manager of the North Yorkshire Learning Partnership, has agreed to attend TRI's April meeting to describe the role of the North Yorkshire & York Employment & Skills Partnership and agree the way in which TRI can inform the Partnership's work to address 'critical issues'.

The Comedy Festival: Peter W. reported that Ian Noble from the Darlington & Stockton Times had been invited to join TRI in order to raise the profile of TRI and to provide support and publicity for the Comedy Festival. Concerns were expressed over the ability of members to discuss in strict confidence local issues and/or TRI activities. It was noted that TRI is not an open meeting held in public. Peter suggested that given these concerns and in order to avoid a potential conflict of interest the situation be reviewed on a regular basis.

6. **Project Update**

- **Hambleton Renaissance Business Plan**

Members considered the update from Mark Haynes on those projects which appear in the Hambleton Renaissance Business Plan circulated prior to the meeting.

- **The Thirsk Comedy Festival**

Peter W. confirmed that the Festival, the working title of which is the 'Yorkshire Comedy Festival', will run for one week commencing 17th July 2009. It is anticipated that the Festival will run for 2 two weeks from 2011 and will achieve regional recognition by 2012. A draft timetable has been agreed and consultation is underway with key partners including RANY, the World of James Herriot and the Darlington & Stockton Times. The Festival will not focus solely on stand-up comedy but will also include after dinner speakers, links to local schools, the Ritz Cinema, 'Rural Arts on Tour' and workshops on specific themes ie. improvisation comedy. Peter indicated that contact has been made with the BBC in the hope that a comedy programme be recorded in Thirsk and invited TRI members to suggest a local marketing company who may be willing to get involved with the promotion of the Festival. Arts Council

funding may be sought to support the Festival. **Action:** Peter W. to provide monthly progress updates.

7. Action Plan Review

It was agreed that in order to rationalise TRI priorities and actions members consider the nine-page Thirsk & Villages Community Plan Review 2009 document circulated prior to the meeting and provide updates on those activities that have been completed at the next meeting to be held Wednesday 18th February. **Action:** Peter C. to circulate the Action Plan Review document to Parish Clerks for consideration and comment.

8. TRI Sub Group Updates:

- **Tourism Group**

Jan reported that a meeting of the Group had been held earlier in the afternoon. Given the low attendance at recent meetings the Group is to consider its role, review the Terms of Reference and decide whether it should continue to meet. It was agreed that the outcome of this discussion be fed back at the next TRI meeting.

- **Thirsk Safe Group**

Peter reported that the next meeting is to be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 25th February at Topcliffe Village Hall.

9. Any Other Business

- **Thirsk School:** Pauline confirmed that Stuart Mason has been appointed Head of Thirsk School and Sixth Form College following the retirement of Chris Lewis.
- **The Sustainable Communities Act 2007:** Peter C. provided a summary of the Act and the impact it will have on the future role of community organisations in influencing Government policy. **Action:** Peter to circulate further details of the Act prior to the next meeting.
- **Car Parking:** it was suggested that TRI support initiatives to minimise the impact of the introduction of car parking charges in October 2009. **Action:** Peter W. to raise this issue at the next meeting of the Thirsk Area Forum to be held on Monday 19th January. Peter agreed that whilst recognising HDC's position he would make reference to displacement issues, in particular with respect to library usage, volunteers, the disabled, those working in the town who live elsewhere and the impact on footfall in shops. It was agreed that TRI encourage the District Council to consider concessionary schemes to reduce the impact of car parking charges, in particular during the pre-Christmas period.
- **Toilets:** concerns were expressed over proposals to close one set of toilets in Thirsk over the winter. **Action:** Peter C. to clarify the situation with Steve Prentice, HDC's Senior Building Services Officer
- **Business Welcome Packs:** It was suggested that TRI explore possibility of producing a bespoke pack for new businesses wishing to relocate to Thirsk for circulation via land agents. **Action:** Peter to contact the HDC Economic Development Unit to confirm whether such a welcome pack exists.

10. Dates for Future Meetings:

18th February

25th March

22nd April

27th May

24th June 29th July 26th August (AGM) 23rd September
21st October 25th November 16th December

All meetings to be held at 7pm at the Old Courthouse, Rural Arts North Yorkshire.