

Minutes of a meeting of the **SPALDING TOWN FORUM** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 27 March 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

R A Gibson (Chairman)

D Ashby
J Le Sage

I Sheard
G J Taylor

J Whitbourn (Vice-
Chairman)

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors G P Scalese, S Chauhan and M Le Sage, together with Pastor Kevin Taylor (Churches Together in Spalding and District)

In Attendance: John Bland (Civic Society), David Jones (Pedals), Councillor E J Sneath, Vanessa Browning (Community Mind Matters) and Christine Lawton (League of Friends of the Johnson Community Hospital),

Community Representatives: Pastor Chas Sandhu (Lighthouse Church)

41. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024

AGREED:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

42. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

43. ACTIONS

The Chairman of the Spalding Town Forum discussed the actions from the previous Forum meeting and updated on each further development.

- **Action AN20 – To assemble a young adult’s group to present their views on the Town Centre.**
 - The Chairman announced that a cohort of students from the Spalding Grammar School would provide a presentation on their views and ideas to the

Action By

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Spalding Town Forum.

- **Action AN21 – To contact the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing regarding film showings and comfortable seating at the South Holland Centre(SHC).**
 - The Chairman confirmed that he would contact the aforementioned Portfolio Holder and would in addition present the views from the Grammar School students' presentation, regarding film showings at the SHC.

- **Action AN22 – To provide a CCTV updated data report to the Forum.**
 - The Chairman conceded that a comprehensive report had been provided to the forum at the previous meeting. The Chairman would add this as an agenda item when the next data report update was due.

- **Action AN23 – To inform the Forum of the proposed opening/closing times of the Sheep Markets toilets.**
 - The Waste Services Department responded that they currently did not have definitive opening/closing times but would expect the times to be in line with other facilities in the Town Centre - 08.00-16.00 hrs.

- **Action AN24 – to look at different funding options for renewing Christmas Lights and Decorations, and report back to the Spalding Town Forum.**
 - The Chairman confirmed that along with the Vice-Chairman of the Spalding Town Forum, Councillor Whitbourn, they would be scrutinising various funding options, enabling provisions for the Christmas lights and decorations for 2024.

- The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, Leisure Centre Delivery and Spalding Town Improvement to provide a verbal update.
 - The Portfolio Holder confirmed that conversations were taking place between the Council's Economic Development Department and Communities Department, regarding extending and enhancing the Christmas offering in Spalding, particularly The Crescent area of the Town.
 - Due to an infrastructure electrical issue, the lights were unable to be erected in The Crescent for

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Christmas 2023.

- Officers were working to resolve these issues, to enable lights and decorations to be visible for Christmas 2024.
- Funding opportunities could be available through the Business Improvement District Board.
- The Portfolio Holder added that an update would be provided at the next meeting.
- The Chairman noted that The Crescent was a lovely area of the town providing a collection of bespoke shops.

44. SPALDING SPECIAL EXPENSES QUARTER 3 REPORT 2023-24

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development and S151) which considered the Spalding Special Expenses and Quarter 3 forecast outturn 2023-24.

The Strategic Finance Manager stated that the Quarter 3 report detailed forecast spend against the Quarter 3 2023-24 budget.

- A budget of £241,375.00 had been approved this time last year by Council.
- Up to September 2023, the forecast outturn was expected to be broadly in line with budget.
- At Quarter 3 with three months additional transactions and analysis of trends, the Strategic Finance Manager had a much clearer picture of the spend for the current year and was forecasting an underspend of £16,000.00
- Reduced premises costs were the largest driver for the variance at £6,000.00.
- Maintenance costs were expected to be less than budget, with lower demand for maintenance due to reduced usage of certain sites.
- Forecast savings on supplies and services was the second largest driver of the variance at £5,500.00. The majority of this underspend related to the previous year's King's Coronation Event, which had a budget of £10,000.00.
- Table 3 in the report broke down the budget and forecast by cost centre, each area had some level of underspend but the most notable was a £4,900.00 underspend for the Monkhouse Ward due to reduced premises costs, together with savings on utilities.
- The Halley Stewart Playing Field site produced a saving of £3,300.00 due to a reduction in premises costs with a new lease anticipated.
- Christmas decorations revealed a saving of £3,000.00 for electricity costs, mainly due to the economic climate at the

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time of budget setting.

- Section 4 of the Quarter 3 report detailed the reserve position, with an opening balance of £103,000.00, any underspend realised at the end of year 2023 would be transferred into the Spalding Special Reserves, essentially a 'rainy-day' pot for one-off expenses.

Councillor Taylor clarified that the Sir Halley Stewart Playing Field lease was for Spalding United Football Club, not Spalding Town Football Club as listed in the report.

The Chairman announced that he was pleased with the said underspends which filtered down to Spalding Special Reserves, for one off events.

AGREED:

That the Spalding Special Expenses and Quarter 3 Forecast 2023-24 be noted.

45. SPALDING GRAMMAR SCHOOL PRESENTATION

The Deputy Head of Spalding Grammar School Sixth Form, Head of Law Politics & Criminology, introduced the Spalding Grammar school students who had compiled a presentation to voice their opinions on Spalding Town Centre and events.

The students wished to share their views on transport links, social issues, and the South Holland Centre, along with lack of diversity in terms of shops, events, and social media.

- **Transport links** – improved transport links would enhance the appeal of the town to the locals, along with tourists, which in turn would help businesses, food establishments, tourism, and recreation.
 - Efficient transport systems contributed to environmental sustainability along with economic growth, providing links for easier access to businesses and employment opportunities.
 - The students noted that the Boston to Spalding bus route, B3 and B9 Brylane was only available on weekdays at limited times, making it difficult for the working person, along with students, who would travel if bus services and timetables were improved.
 - West Pinchbeck only provided a school bus during term time, with no access to Spalding Town Centre at the weekends.
- **Social Issues** – Incorporating - homelessness,

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unemployment, and addiction, and how this linked to the circle bench in Hall Place.

- The circle bench radiated a negative stigma with numerous families avoiding that particular area. These issues could be addressed through additional community policing.
 - To create a more appealing area and encourage footfall, the addition of a new seating area with flower planters, additional bins to alleviate littering, improved lighting and replanting trees would create a cleaner more attractive environment.
 - Spalding was currently facing a large increase in homelessness and addiction, borne out in recent statistics showing 28 homeless individuals per officer. These numbers were high, putting Spalding in the top 20% of deprived areas.
- **South Holland Centre** – the students agreed this was a great place for youngsters to socialise, however many of the films were scheduled either during school hours or on weekday nights.
 - A recent showing of the film Priscilla was only screened at 2pm on Friday, thus not enabling students to view the film. The Bob Marley film appealed to a younger audience but again was not screened at the weekend.
 - **Lack of shop diversity** – The diversity of shops within Spalding Town Centre was limited, driving young adults to shop elsewhere.
 - The limited choices meant young adults visited competitors to purchase goods such as clothing and footwear outside of Spalding Town Centre, for example, Queensgate Shopping Centre in Peterborough and Springfield's. This was inconvenient and frustrating for young people.
 - Spalding residents were not always getting value for money, as without competition, prices could become inflated.
 - The students advocated more shops and less empty shops, and improved brands, to entice younger shoppers into Spalding town centre.
 - Promotion of local businesses, with complimentary advertisement, such as an Instagram page that locals could view alongside national engagement was suggested.
 - It was suggested that additional sponsorship for local events, such as the Pumpkin Festival and Spalding Flower Parade, would increase

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- awareness of the town to a wider audience, that could potentially wish to visit shopping areas that were more aesthetically pleasing.
- It was suggested that increased food venues that provided a wider variety of cuisine, could in turn cater for a larger target market.
 - The students brought to the attention of the Forum that Spalding currently had five gambling shops within the town centre. This could encourage anti-social behaviour and addiction, impacting the community, including social, economic, and cultural effects. Excessive gambling could contribute towards crime and potentially influence young people to gamble.
- **Events** - The students noted that they enjoyed the events that took place in Spalding but believed there could be some improvements -
 - Pumpkin Festival - young adults wished to see the event continue into the evening, culminating with a firework display, this would appeal to everyone especially youngsters, creating a unique and entertaining event.
 - The students wished to see more interesting activities that appealed to teenagers and young adults - currently the event activities focussed on young children, for example, face painting and tractor rides.
 - Communities Christmas Event - the students would like a more comprehensive Christmas Market, incorporating a greater diversity of stalls beyond wreaths and socks. This could include workshops, demonstrations for young adults, handmade crafts, and bespoke ornaments, alongside food trucks with locally sourced food.
 - Spalding Market - this should be a vibrant occasion filled with community spirit, incorporating a wider variety of vendors, selling bespoke goods, for example, glassware, jewellery, candles, and plants, enticing residents to visit the town centre, and addressing the declining footfall.
 - Food trucks selling cuisine from around the world would provide more variety, enabling students to make their purchases within the time frame of their scheduled lunch break.
 - Executing the aforementioned improvements, the students agreed that the Spalding Market would be more capable of competing with Springfield's and Queensgate, selling alternative artisan products that

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differed from competitor locations.

- **Social media** - The students believed that Spalding was suffering from a lack of advertising and would benefit from having a social media platform.
 - Platforms such as Facebook could be too formal and forum like
 - A platform like Instagram would be beneficial for event advertising promoting local businesses. Social media platforms were inexpensive and had a larger catchment, enabling increased footfall into the town centre.
 - The students commented that the publicity promoting the Ayscoughfee Night Light Event had been advertised on a social media platform, but that the information had been difficult to locate, hence why young adults seldom saw the advertisements for town events.
 - The students recognised the importance of word of mouth, and how in addition to social media this could promote footfall for future Town Centre events.

The Chairman thanked the students for their excellent presentation and fantastic ideas, and hoped the Town Forum was a platform for their inspirations to be heard and actioned.

The Chairman could not promise that every point/suggestion would be actioned but noted that certain improvements the students had suggested would be inexpensive to implement.

The Chairman wished to forward the students ideas onto the Town Board, which had recently been established with access to funds of £20 million over a ten-year period to improve/enhance Spalding Town Centre.

The Chairman asked the Forum if there were any questions for the students.

- Councillor Sheard commented that all members of the Forum agreed that the students had provided an excellent presentation.
- Councillor Sheard believed that a new seating area was planned, along with additional films proposed to encourage young adults into the Town Centre.
- Councillor Sheard welcomed the students' ideas and suggestions, adding that the students were an asset to the community and that their teacher must be very proud of their achievements.

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The following questions were raised

- The Civic Society representative asked the students if they had the capacity to demonstrate how to use social media and Instagram, enabling some of the older generation to use those platforms?
 - The students responded that they would be delighted to offer advice on how to set up and use social media platforms. The students explained that when online platforms were relatively easy to navigate and administrate and would become easier with practise.
- Councillor E Sneath agreed that age-appropriate activities for teenagers should be considered when organising events and would propose those ideas to the Communities' team.
- Councillor E Sneath enlightened the students that a teenage market had been introduced for young adults, enabling them to set up and sell items and would notify the students of the upcoming dates.
- Councillor Taylor informed the students that a Town Board had been established to improve Spalding Town Centre. The seating circle would be removed, designs had been approved, including planted areas, promising a more attractive Town Centre and Riverside.
- Christine Lawton asked if the South Holland Centre film times were adjusted to appeal to young people, would this be supported by young people coming into town to use the facility?
 - The students responded that they would like to support the films and events, but due to poor advertising, and no presence on social media platforms, the students were unaware of what films were showing.
- The Pedals representative informed the students that Brylane Boston Buses were run by Black Cat services on Saturdays but conceded that they were not advertised.
- Councillor Sheard asked the students if they would come back in six months' time and challenge the Forum on what improvements had been made?
 - The students replied they would be delighted to return to the Spalding Town Forum. Being Politics students, the Spalding Town Centre was

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a project they were very interested in and would like to review all implemented improvements.

- The Chairman asked the students what specific types of food options would appeal to a younger audience?
 - The students expanded that on their lunch period they had limited places to eat, with limited time. Fast food options that were quick were in short supply, and the students experienced long queues in order to purchase lunch.
 - The students would want to see a variety of food trucks that offered good food at reasonable prices with quick service.
 - Due to the lack of choice, students often decided not to visit the town during the lunch period therefore decreasing the already decreasing footfall.

- The Chairman asked if they preferred 'grab and go', or 'sit in' venues?
 - The students replied that fast food venues with a quick take away service would be their preference.
 - Students felt that more interesting food venues/trucks would bring in a larger demographic of families who would choose to dine out in the town if more varied choices were available.

- The Chairman asked the students what types of films they would pay to see at the South Holland Centre?
 - The students said that films shown at the weekends from midday onwards into the evening would appeal.
 - The students enjoyed comedy/action movies that were age appropriate.
 - The students referenced that films do not need to compete with the likes of the Showcase in Peterborough, but rather for the South Holland Centre to provide entertainment for young people, enabling teenagers to meet up with friends and catch a film when they were not at school.

- The Chairman enquired what specific offering Springfield's provided that drew young people there? What could be replicated in Spalding town centre that would give the same draw?
 - The students responded that Springfield's supplied a wider diversity of branded clothing stores, alongside a larger variety of food chains, including Subway, Starbucks, plus the Garden Centre.
 - McDonalds was in close proximity, so by visiting the

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- Springfield's Outlet young people would be more inclined to stay for food there.
- The students felt that if the town centre could deliver younger branded shops with exciting new food chains, it would entice footfall into the town centre.
- The Pedals representative asked if the secondary schools had notice boards where posters could be displayed, promoting upcoming events?
 - The students responded that a notice board would not be their preferred form of engagement. They reiterated that additional social media platforms should be used to entice youngsters to follow and engage. By engaging with social media platforms which could be shared, a far larger audience and demographic could be reached. They asked the Forum to look to the future to facilitate this.

The Chairman thanked the students for their presentation and for answering the Forum's questions.

AGREED:

That the presentation be noted, and that the students be invited back to a meeting of the Spalding Town Forum in six months' time to consider progress.

The Chairman asked for thanks to be sent on behalf of the Forum to the students and teacher for their fantastic ideas and presentation.

46. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following items were raised:

Graffiti

- The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, Leisure Centre Delivery and Spalding Town Improvement provided the Forum with an update on the issue of graffiti in the district.
 - The District Council Community Warden Officer had been very proactive engaging with businesses, to encourage the removal of graffiti from business properties.
 - The perpetrators committing the offensive graffiti had to be held accountable for the ongoing damage.
 - This week, officers from Lincolnshire County Council were repairing and removing graffiti from various areas around Spalding, including Pinchbeck Road, Wygate Park and areas within the Monkhouse

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ward.

- Anglian Water had responded swiftly by removing graffiti on property that they owned.
- The Portfolio Holder responded to Councillor Sheard, who at the previous Forum meeting was concerned about a broken, vandalised telephone box, which contained glass, graffiti, and was an unpleasant site. BT had been contacted, however, to date no confirmed date for when the telephone box would be removed had been received.

The Chairman asked the Portfolio Holder how residents could report graffiti?

- The Portfolio Holder explained that offensive graffiti should be reported through the SHDC website, thus enabling the Community Wardens to gather evidence to apprehend the culprits.
- Cllr Sheard asked whether CCTV evidence of the individuals responsible for the graffiti was available and had the cameras been viewed to permit the authorities to pursue an arrest.
 - The Portfolio Holder was unaware whether the owners of the camera had contacted the police and if any criminal activity had been captured.
 - Prosecuting any lawbreaking culprits had been proven to reduce crime.

The River Welland

Councillor James Le Sage updated the Forum on an issue he had raised at a previous meeting with his suggestion on the potential of the “opening up” of the Welland River.

- Councillor J Le Sage informed the Forum that the river could potentially be opened up for punting, kayaking, and small water craft. This would be a huge draw for tourists, beneficial for local businesses and increase Spalding Town Centre footfall, coupled with providing outdoor activities that would appeal to all age demographics.
- Councillor J Le Sage would shortly be attending meetings with interested parties/relevant authorities to formulate a way forward.

Councillor Le Sage would keep the forum updated and asked the Chairman of the Forum to add this as an agenda item for the next meeting.

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Johnson Hospital League of Friends

Christine Lawton, representative for the Johnson Hospital League of Friends informed the Forum that SHDC Councillors had recently provided donations to purchase 23 televisions for the patients at the hospital. The hospital had also recently updated the café area providing outside seating for patients, and she thanked the Forum for their continued support.

47. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

11 June 2024 – 6.30pm

48. SPALDING TOWN FORUM SUMMER EVENT

The Chairman informed the group that an update was not available at present, however the Forum would be advised in more detail of the upcoming Ayscough-Fest event at the next Spalding Town Forum meeting.

(The meeting ended at 7.35pm)