

Rural Market Town Group

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Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer) to Wisbech Town Council



Context - The Town and the Council of Wisbech

The Town

- Northern-most town in the County (Cambridgeshire), with a population of around 33,000; borders onto West Norfolk
- A diverse community with high levels of immigration from Eastern Europe in recent years
- Generally a low wage economy; historically, employment has been in agricultural and associated services
- A number of challenges (including high IMD scores; a number of electoral wards in Wisbech are the most deprived in the County)
- A number of opportunities, including many community groups, a “rich” historic/cultural offer and an inland port

The Council

- 18 members (covering 7 electoral wards); all elected (political groups)
- 7 service committees
- Annual council expenditure of £460,000 approximately
- Total Precept for 2021/22 of £368,885; £57.40 for a Band D equivalent property
- Total Precept for 2022/23 of £389,640; £59.91 for a Band D equivalent property
- 4 part-time staff
- Operates daily markets, public toilets, community buildings, 7 allotments sites, a car park and delivers an annual programme of community events and festivals


Wisbech Town Council's ambition

To make Wisbech a better place for the people who live in the town, work in the town, visit the town or invest in the town

Project ready – priority
schemes – partnership
working

Community projects

There are numerous projects and initiatives which support the local community in either direct or indirect ways, including:

-  Wisbech partnership (community support and development)
- Community-led Local Development (getting people closer to employment)
- Wisbech Reads (improving literacy)
- Wisbech High Street (town centre re-generation, utilising HLF funding)
- Creative People and Places (increasing participation in arts and culture)
- Wisbech Community Farm (therapeutic support to vulnerable people)
- Safer Wisbech group (reducing the public perception of crime and disorder in the town)

Wisbech partnership

- Partnership established, comprising: representatives of three tiers of local government, voluntary-sector, local charitable organisations and CICs, arts and culture organisations, housing associations, local and regional businesses (such as Anglian Water)
- Public “listening exercise” – 3 questions (asked on-line and face-to-face) in 2018; funding accessed from DCLG
- 1,000 + responses (around 70 people attended follow-up workshops)
- Priority themes were set by the partnership to respond to the results of the “listening exercise” (each priority theme has a lead (or joint lead) person or organisation)
- Projects are developed which would deliver actions to address the community’s concerns/issues
- Opportunities for funding for the delivery of projects are explored; the partnership has produced a Funding Strategy (see later slide)
- Many sources of funding have short application “windows”, so projects need to be “oven ready”

Wisbech partnership

Public “listening” exercise – the 3 questions (asked on-line and face-to-face) in 2018 were:

1. What do you love about Wisbech?
2. How would you make it better?
3. What would you like to do about it?

Wisbech partnership – how it operates

- Whole partnership group (30 members approx.; meets quarterly)
- Strategic Group (12 members; meets bi-monthly)
- A number of sub-groups (meet as and when necessary), including Communications, Funding and Safer Wisbech
- Whole partnership and Strategic Group meetings are chaired by the Clerk to Wisbech Town Council
- Administrative support to the partnership is provided by the Think Communities team at Cambridgeshire County Council

Wisbech partnership – priority themes

- A safe and clean town
- Making the most of our heritage and tourism
- More investment in better facilities and amenities
- Things to do for young people and children
- Helping those in crisis
- Connecting people; bringing them together and highlighting “what’s on” in Wisbech

The partnership is also planning to re-engage with the community – but not via a separate consultation – to see whether the current themes remain relevant in a “post-Covid world”

Wisbech partnership – funding

- Funding Strategy developed – to create a more cohesive and positive approach across Wisbech to funding and to provide a framework to engage with and to support partners in the delivery of externally-funded projects
- Strategy has 3 parts: (1) identifying potential projects; highlighting funding sources; (3) producing project-based action plans
- The expected outcomes of the strategy are to ensure that: (1) there is a co-ordinated, strategic and informed approach across Wisbech; (2) bids and services are complementing each other and create better value; (3) a higher quality and standard of applications would be submitted to funders; (4) there would be early identification of issues associated with proposals; (5) there would be transparency and information-sharing across organisations working in Wisbech

Funding – potential sources

A number of potential sources of funding have been identified (some already accessed), including:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Big Lottery
- European Structural Fund
- Children in Need
- Welcome Back Fund
- Arts Council
- Awards for All
- Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Market Towns Fund
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Summary - how does the Town Council do things?

- Works collaboratively with “professional” partners, charitable and not-for-profit organisations and the business-sector
- Supports community groups
- Takes opportunities to access third-party funding
- Has representation and input into projects aimed at improving people’s lives/opportunities
- Achieves “linkages” between projects (some of the projects are shown in earlier slide)
- Takes a pro-active approach to communications, marketing and promotions

**Any Questions
(observations or
suggestions)?**

Contact Information

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