

ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH TOWN COUNCIL

'The Ashby Project' – Closure Report.

Project Closure Report Purpose.

The Project Closure Report is the final document produced for 'The Ashby Project' and is to be used by the Programme Board and the Finance, Tourism & Administration Committee of the Town Council to summarise the success of developing and implementing the project, resolve all open issues and formally close the project as at 31st March 2020.

Background to the Project.

As part of the statutory public consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan during the summer and autumn of 2014 and early 2015 several focus groups were established to determine which policies should form the basis of the emerging plan. In addition, members of the public were asked three questions – what do you like about the town? what do you not like about the town? and what would you change about the town?

A distillation of the key messages from the replies that were received to these questions was as follows:

- We have a great town centre, but we can still make improvements to the public realm of the town centre. We need a legible signage strategy for the town;
- Car parking is an issue. We need more capacity and innovative solutions to providing parking in the town;
- The town has a significant tourist offering but there is an inconsistent 'brand' for Ashby and an incoherent approach to marketing. We need to do more to market and promote the town, promote tourism, boost the town's heritage and encourage links to the National Forest;
- We have some great open spaces in the town, but we could make better use of them and enhance them. We need to improve pedestrian and cycle access to the town centre and to improve links with attractions in the immediate vicinity.

There were a number of ideas, concepts, suggestions and projects which emerged from the focus groups and public consultations which took place as part of the preparation of the plan which could not be taken forward at that time either because they fell outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan or due to lack of resources.

During the spring of 2016 discussions took place with NWLDC on how it could support the Town Council's ambitions to deliver a number of projects to improve the public realm, encourage footfall, provide additional car parking capacity and enhance the heritage and visitor potential of the town's assets.

NWLDC Cabinet gave approval at its meetings on 8th March 2016 and 14th June 2016 to the acquisition of the former North Street health centre site for redevelopment. The vision for the Cultural & Leisure Quarter was confirmed by Cabinet on 13th December and additional resources were allocated to the project.

Subsequently, the Cabinet at its meeting on 20th September 2016 approved the allocation of £300,000 to one-off projects which supported the delivery of aspects of the emerging Ashby Neighbourhood Plan. Of this £300,000 for the one-off projects, £100,000 was subsequently allocated to the Cultural

& Leisure Quarter Project (see below) as the Town Council's contribution. The Finance Committee of the Town Council has also agreed that the £34k section 106 contribution from the Aldi development at Dent's Road [09/00430/FULM] would be allocated to fund improvements to the public realm of the town centre.

A further sum of £24,000.00 was added to the total project resources in order to employ a Town Centre Manager for two years from April 2018 following the expiration of the contract of the Project Manager. The Town Centre Manager took the Project Manager's responsibilities for delivery of the project and reporting to the Programme Board.

The Ashby Project was to be completed by the end of March 2019 but the timescale was extended to March 2020.

Expected Outcomes of 'The Ashby Project'.

- To successfully implement the changes identified during the public consultation of the Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan and by the stakeholder groups;
- To deliver any projects within budget, to agreed timescales and to an agreed specification;
- Undertake suitable stakeholder management;
- Establish appropriate governance procedures.

Project Governance.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the project, the town was partitioned into three 'quarters':

- Business Quarter (largely Market Street and the courtyards off it but also including Brook Street, Bath Street, The Green and the lower part of Kilwardby Street);
- Heritage Quarter to include the Bath Grounds, Ashby Castle, St. Helen's Churchyard;
- Cultural & Leisure Quarter which covers the area including Hood Park Leisure Centre, the Venture Theatre, Ivanhoe College, Ashby Museum and Ashby Library.

Each quarter then had a stakeholder group established to assist the Town Council in identifying suitable, sustainable projects which would contribute to the vision for the town. Each Group tackled a specific theme and its issues:

- defining the aims for their Group;
- considering options for dealing with the issues and achieving the aims;
- producing projects which would ensure the aims are achieved.

Each group co-ordinated community engagement relating to their specific quarter. Work by the Stakeholder Groups was to be in conformity with the themes which emerged from the public consultation and the Focus Groups of the Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan. This formed the framework for each Group's discussions. The terms of reference for each stakeholder group is detailed in Annex 'A'.

The Stakeholder Groups reported to the Programme Board, providing a written update for each meeting of the Board as required. The Project Manager provided secretarial support to each Group. The Programme Board decided which Stakeholder Group would lead on any matter which was relevant to more than one Group.

The Finance, Tourism & Administration Committee at its meeting on Monday 13th March 2017 decided that the simplest, most direct and least resource intensive option was for the Programme Manager to report to the Committee as a standing agenda item at each of its meetings on progress of the project

until its completion. The Committee has, therefore, received written update reports from the Programme Manager in June, September and December 2017, in March, June and September 2018, January, March and July and October 2019, and in January and April 2020.

Budget Performance.

As at 31st March 2020 a total of £188,340.84 has been committed out of a total budget of £224,000.00.

Major areas of expenditure to date have been £48k on improvements to our open spaces and town centre, £32k on marketing and promotion and £34k on the brand ambassadors' scheme for the promotion and reach of the brand. Increasing capacity to deliver the project was £31k and costs associated with engaging a Town Centre Manager for two years to March 2020 were £32k.

The Project remains within budget tolerances and there remains, therefore, a balance of £35,659.16 which has been kept in reserve to resource the 'Welcome to Ashby' signs x 7 and the new brown tourism signage for the A 511.

Principal Achievements of 'The Ashby Project'.

➤ Promotion, Marketing & Branding.

Phase I. An external specialist marketing and branding agency was engaged to develop the new Ashby brand and its offer. The contract for this work was awarded to the 'Together Agency'. It was the work that the Together Agency had undertaken with Southend-On-Sea, the National Forest and the National Trust which helped to secure it the contract.

A facilitated stakeholder workshop was held on Tuesday 20th June 2017 to agree the main Unique Selling Points (USPs) for Ashby. An open invite went out to all three stakeholder groups to ensure an equal mix of views and ideas. The branding work together with a new logo for the town was the first major piece of work commissioned by the project.

The formal launch of the new brand took place at 'Rebound' on 16th November 2017 with around 30 stakeholders present. A branding toolkit was developed to ensure consistent use of the brand and a successful application was made to the Intellectual Property Office for copyright protection of the brand logos. Three videos were commissioned: one from the business world, a community response and one which explains the process used to arrive at the final brand and logo.

Phase II of the project was the development and encouragement of brand ambassadors to create brand awareness, encourage its use, support local businesses and extend the reach of the brand. This phase of the project has been very well received by local businesses and continues to be very successful. A local bee farmer offered to promote the brand on his products and an initial run of 3,000 jars of honey displaying the new town brand were distributed.

To date a total of twenty shop frontages have been now been re-branded through the grant scheme. Zamanis Restaurant, Owen Jones, Short Cut (on Mill Lane Mews), Goose, Verity's Nails, Bow Boutique, London & Harley, the Lyric Rooms and the Fair-Trade shop are a few examples.

An initial supply of Ashby branded 'bags for life' were distributed among retailers to encourage their use and to reduce reliance on plastic bags. In addition, the Ashby 20 Road Race has distributed 3,500 branded Ashby bags over the last two years to competitors in the race. A further 4,500 bags for life

have been distributed via the Town Centre Traders to try and reduce our use of plastic bags as part of a 'Green Tourism' initiative.

All of the new street furniture in the town is now on-brand including waste bins, bollards and benches. Legion House has been re-signed. The Town Council website has been re-skinned. Town Council vehicles carry the logo. The exterior of public toilets on Derby Road have been repainted on-brand.

➤ **Cultural & Leisure Quarter.**

NWLDC Cabinet gave approval at its meetings on 8th March 2016 and 14th June 2016 to the acquisition of the former North Street Health Centre site for redevelopment. The vision for the Cultural & Leisure Quarter was confirmed by Cabinet on 13th December and additional resources were allocated to the project. The Cultural & Leisure Stakeholder Group has met on a regular basis to monitor the progress of the project.

The building on the site was demolished to increase parking capacity for the town by a net 52 spaces. The gates which formed the entrance to Hood Park were relocated to the site and now form a feature entrance with seating. Electric vehicle charging points have been installed at North Street car park in April 2019. They are proving very popular showing month on month usage increase.

Following a competitive tender exercise responsibility for the management of Hood Park Leisure Centre passed to Everyone Active on 1st May 2019. Internal improvement works to the leisure centre to reconfigure the building to create a modern, high quality leisure centre including new gym with brand new Technogym equipment, dance studio, multi-purpose function room, male / female dry side changing and toilets, new wet side changing rooms, spin studio, reception area with barrier access control have now been completed.

The outdoor swimming pool, which is the only one in Leicestershire, has been renamed 'Ashby Lido'. The leisure centre complex will be re-named as Ashby Leisure Centre & Lido when new external signage is installed.

➤ **Public Works of Art.**

The project commissioned a piece of public art to mark the Cultural & Leisure Quarter. A commissioning group was established and, following a national call-out, an artist, Adrian Moakes, was appointed to undertake the commission. Following a round of social engagement including local schools, further details, including the artist's impressions of the proposed work on site, were provided to the Programme Board and a presentation to the Town Council. "The Heart of the Forest" was unveiled to the public on Tuesday 19th March 2019.

Adrian was also commissioned to work with local schools to develop ground-based artwork at North Street car park positioned in front of the former Hood Park gates replacing the yellow paving slabs. The Forest Floor was created using the designs from 160 local schoolchildren that were created as part of Adrian's work with several Ashby schools. The work of art was unveiled on Thursday 21st November 2019.

The public works of art were subject to separate funding arrangements from the main project.

➤ **Town Centre Public Realm Improvements.**

The Business Stakeholder Group provided a number of suggestions for improvements to the public realm of the town centre. The scope of the town centre improvement project was agreed at the Finance Committee of the Town Council in January 2019 as follows:

- Replace or re-paint the street furniture – benches, bins, bike racks, finger posts, traffic bollards;
- Legible Ashby – provide visitor information points on North and South Street car parks and on Market Street;
- “Paint the Town”;
- Improve the frontage of the Royal Mail Sorting office;
- Improve the area outside the public toilets on Derby Road;
- Consider the installation of ‘street art’;
- Replace the current notice boards with something more suitable;
- Plant more trees/green the town centre;
- Work with the National Forest Company to mark the National Forest Way as it passes through the town (including reviewing its three information boards within the town);
- De-cluttering of the signage within the town centre including removal of commercial signage.

All of these initiatives have now been completed with one or two exceptions and these will be carried forward into ‘business as usual’.

➤ **‘Purple Flag’ Award.**

Purple Flag status is for town and city centres that meet or surpass the standards of excellence in managing the evening and night time economy. It is an assessment against a comprehensive set of standards, management processes and good practice examples designed to help transform town and city centres at night. It is a positive initiative that indicates an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out.

Ashby first achieved the award in 2017 and has been successful in applying for re-accreditation each year. A Perception Survey of the town’s night time economy was carried out and it was clear that the standards and expectations are to a very high standard. 82.01% of people said that they feel safe in town after 5pm and that the Ashby has a great atmosphere and is a vibrant and lively place to be.

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council is committed to ensuring Purple Flag re-accreditation is in place every year and is striving to uphold and raise the standards ensuring that Ashby remains a pleasant and healthy town to visit during the evening or night out.

➤ **Town Centre Manager.**

During the implementation of ‘The Ashby Project’ it became apparent that the town would benefit from a post-holder who could deliver activity to promote the physical, social and economic well-being of the town centre.

Stuart Benson, a former town centre trader, was initially appointed to the post of Town Centre Manager on a temporary basis in April 2018. The Town Council has subsequently confirmed Stuart on a permanent basis with effect from April 2020.

The main objectives of the Town Centre Manager are:

- To work with partners on promoting and organising events in the town centre, including preparation of promotional material and newsletters. Develop and implement a marketing, social media and communication strategy. A quarterly events calendar and postcards are distributed to all shops and businesses in the town;

- To build relationships with town businesses, including the Ashby Town Centre Traders, and to keep them informed of relevant public sector developments;
- To develop and implement initiatives which support the legacy and sustainability of the outputs from 'The Ashby Project'.

Stuart has responsibility for the co-ordination of events and promotions within the town and reports to the Events & Entertainment Committee of the Town Council to ensure that the town has a well-structured event programme each year to increase footfall, longer dwell time and higher spend. The events also provide an opportunity to promote well-being, social cohesion and community spirit.

He is a member of the Committee of the Ashby Town Centre Traders Group; he works with the Leicestershire Market Towns Group, Ashby Pub Watch, the CCTV working group and he develops relationships between businesses, the District and County Councils, resident and community groups and other town centre interests for the promotion of the town including the night-time economy.

In addition to the town's success with Purple Flag accreditation, Ashby has also been:

- Listed by the Daily Telegraph in April 2015 as the 8th most desirable place to live in the UK;
- Winner of the 'Best Shopping Experience' at the Leicestershire Tourism Awards 2018;
- 'Highly Commended' in the Best Town or Village category at the Leicestershire Tourism Awards 2018;
- Shortlisted for the Great British High Street 'Rising Star' Award for 2019; and,
- Listed by the 'Leicester Mercury' as the best town in Leicestershire in January 2019.

➤ **Free Town Centre Wi-Fi.**

Shoppers and visitors in Ashby de la Zouch are now able to access free Wi-Fi in the town centre and over 2,000 registered users have logged in to use the system.

The system went live in July 2019 and during November, there was press coverage to promote availability of the Wi-Fi network and window stickers were distributed to retailers in the town centre to publicise the scheme. Users can log on to Wi-Fi in Ashby by accessing the 'NWLeicsFreeWiFi' network from their mobile devices.

Free guest Wi-Fi is proven to bring benefits to businesses and improve the shopping, recreational and tourist experience of those that visit towns, increasing footfall in the process. The benefits of free public Wi-Fi include:

- Users save on their mobile data and associated charges, which encourages people to stay longer in town centres;
- Businesses can more effectively use the internet as a marketing tool to attract customers;
- It becomes easier for people to navigate through the towns and find the shops, restaurants and venues they are looking for;
- NWLDC and the Town Council can use data to monitor footfall trends in the towns. No personally identifiable data will be linked to the generation of footfall trends and statistics for either town.

The free town centre wi-fi project was subject to separate funding arrangements from the main project.

➤ **Open Spaces.**

The Heritage Group accepted responsibility for undertaking an audit of the town's open spaces and produced a written report of its findings for the Group to consider.

The priorities from that audit were as follows:

- Interpretation panels for Hood Park, the Loudoun Memorial and the Town Cemetery;
- Replacement on-brand bins across all of the parks x 50;
- Replacement on-brand benches x 30;
- The purchase of the four-acre Prior Park Road Field from LCC to protect it for future generations and to promote a 'green corridor' from the Bath Grounds to Ashby Castle;
- Advance negotiations to purchase the freehold of the Bath Grounds;
- Further improvements to the cemetery to include an interpretation panel, completion of the works to the roadways, replacement water butts, a new information leaflet and to re-paint the cemetery gates,
- Promote wildlife areas where possible and practicable.

All of these initiatives have now been completed with one or two exceptions and these will be carried forward into 'business as usual'.

➤ **'Green Flag' Award.**

Green Flag is a nationally recognised award that supports organisations that provide quality green spaces. It was launched in 1996 to transform the country's green open spaces which had gone into decline during the 1970s and 1980s. Today more than 1,600 parks and green spaces have been awarded a green flag.

It has shown that running a park that is well-used and valued by its community is about more than just cutting the grass. It has established that effective management and the use of skilled staff, along with the support of the local community, are key to creating fantastic public parks.

The award helps focus activity on the important elements of management and provides a proven, successful framework. It enables the development of a costed management plan that allows resources to be focused in areas that will have the biggest effect. It also allows the Town Council to demonstrate that resources are being used to their best effect and money is being spent appropriately and delivering value for money.

The aim of the Green Flag Award is to ensure that everyone has access to a quality green space and to enable them to live more healthy lifestyles.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk would submit a Draft Management Plan for accreditation for the Bath Grounds by the deadline date of 31st January 2020. This has been achieved.

➤ **'Legible Ashby'.**

The Heritage Group also instigated the 'Legible Ashby' Project which was designed to improve signage in and around the town, direct visitors to the town's assets and provide better access to information for visitors to the town.

New visitor information boards have been installed at North Street and South Street car parks, on Market Street and at Coxon's Mews. Each of these information points has a 3-D map of the town, a map dispenser and finger posts to direct visitors to the town's assets.

A replacement, on-brand town guide was also provided following a photography competition to supply images for the guide. A new community notice board has been installed outside the Derby Road public conveniences. Removal of old signs, notice boards, finger posts etc. has been undertaken.

Leicestershire County Council was commissioned to undertake an audit of current signage. The Programme Manager and Project Manager met with colleagues from the County Council to discuss the de-cluttering of signage project for the town. The LCC undertook a very thorough audit of the signage in and around Ashby (more than 400 signs were examined). A large number (around 60) were removed immediately as they are redundant or misleading and a further 80 were changed/amalgamated or improved. "Ashby de la Zouch" was included rather than just 'Ashby'.

An audit was also completed of more than 400 road signs. Of these, 12 tourism signs, 60 warning signs, 8 HGV signs, 35 directional signs and 9 local signs were removed. In addition, changes were made to 22 directional signs, 15 warning signs, 3 parking signs and 1 HGV sign.

A list (with photographic evidence) of the large number of developer signs around the town was supplied to the LCC for the appropriate enforcement action to be taken against those house builders who persist in erecting, or fail to remove, illegal signage.

New 'Welcome to Ashby' signs are to be installed on the seven entrance roads into the town with an image of the Loudoun Memorial. Proposals are awaited from the LCC on improvements to the brown tourism signage around the town particularly on the A 511.

➤ **Visitor Marketing Strategy: 'Forest Town'.**

Ashby is at the heart of the National Forest. It is a key market town within the forest area and is the only town on the National Forest Way. The National Forest Way extends over 75 miles from the National Forest Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to Beacon Hill Country Park in Leicestershire.

Central to the visitor marketing strategy for the town is to establish Ashby as a 'Forest Town' and the forest town to visit while in the National Forest.

The Town Council will work with the National Forest Company and the District Council to develop the concept in three strands: connectivity, communication and interpretation. Some initial ideas are to build on the success of the physical improvements to the town centre, visual interpretation, forest themed events ("Forest Fortnight"), a forest inspired art trail, engaging with the National Forest Way Challenge in 2021.

➤ **St. Helen's Churchyard.**

St. Helen's Church is one of the principal landmarks of the town. The churchyard is a major thoroughfare into and out of the town. A public footpath runs either side of the churchyard (defined on the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way in Leicestershire as path O94 and O93). With the expansion of the town and additional housing on Leicester Road the churchyard is increasingly a gateway to the town centre.

At its meeting in June 2015, following a recommendation from Councillor Rushton, the Town Council's Finance, Tourism & Administration Committee instigated a project to re-order the churchyard.

The aim of the project was that the churchyard area more adequately provides:

- An appropriate setting for the Grade I listed Parish Church of St. Helen within the Ashby Conservation Area;
- A place of peace and recreation for the local community and visitors;
- An enduring and respectful memorial to the generations of Ashby people buried in the churchyard;
- Support to the Heritage Project of the Parochial Church Council to provide an educational setting and visitor attraction befitting the history of the site. St. St Helen's Church Heritage Project was given an award of almost £605,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The funding supported a major enhancement project for the church and its surrounding area, to benefit the growing community of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. The funding allowed the development of a wide-ranging heritage project, including a new Community Heritage Centre with displays, interpretation in the church and improved lighting. A part-time Heritage Officer was also appointed to run an educational programme for children and adults, including innovative creative workshops. A team of volunteers were given training to welcome and guide visitors and to carry out further research on this most interesting part of old Ashby.

Resources. The Town Council set aside an initial sum of £4,000.00 from its reserves to fund the investigative and design work. A sum of £10,000.00 was secured from the District Council's Twenty for Seven scheme. The Town Clerk negotiated a further £20,000.00 from the Prestop Park farm solar farm community benefit fund towards the project.

The project also benefitted from NWLDC Cabinet approval for the re-allocation of the £50,000 which had previously ear-marked by Cabinet on 10th February 2015 to support the provision of free guest wi-fi in the town centre to support the Town Council's planned improvements and the re-ordering of St. Helen's churchyard. A total, therefore, of £84,000.00.

A total of £77,451.28 has been committed out of a total budget of £84,000.00. This leaves a balance of £6,548.72 which has been kept in reserve for improvements to the entrance gates and pillars to the churchyard from Lower Church Street.

What the St. Helen's Churchyard Project has achieved:

- The re-ordering work in the churchyard is now largely complete;
- Architectural up-lighting of the bell-tower has been installed to make a feature of the church as a major local landmark. The lighting is computer controlled and can be programmed to change colour to mark the church year or national events;
- A number of trees were removed from the churchyard and many others crown-raised to allow more light in and open up the space. Self-set trees and bushes were removed;
- The paths up to the church door and the vestry door have been resurfaced. The path kerb edgings have been installed;
- Action has been taken to deal with dog-fouling, littering and anti-social behaviour;
- The steps, slabbed path and benches on west side of churchyard have been removed;
- Landscaping work has also been completed with the re-instatement of the flower beds and the clearance of the area adjacent to the wall which borders Upper Church Street;
- A building-condition survey report of the wall between the churchyard and the former Manor House School has been completed;
- The street-lights in the churchyard have been replaced with heritage lamps and the lamp- posts repainted black. New benches and waste bins have been installed.

There is a limited amount of funding remaining within the budget for the project. The next steps are to consider what improvements can be made to the entrance pillars and gates at the Lower Church Street entrance to the churchyard.

➤ **Open Issues to be transferred to 'Business as Usual'.**

- The 'Welcome to Ashby' gateway signs have yet to be installed;
- Options and costings for the installation of new brown tourism signage on the A 511 are awaited from the LCC;
- Development of the concept of Ashby as the 'Forest Town';
- Further consideration to be given to a 'Walkers are Welcome' initiative as part of the link to the National Forest Way and the National Forest Way Challenge in 2021;
- Implementation of the Ashby Cycling Strategy, especially links to Hicks Lodge;
- A project is to be developed to extend the heritage blue plaque scheme in the town and to mark the courtyards;
- A Business Improvement District (BID) feasibility study is being undertaken;
- The re-branding of Ashby Leisure Centre & Lido;
- Improve the frontage of the Royal Mail Sorting office;
- Consideration to be given to one or two more community notice boards in the town centre;
- Improvements to be considered for the entrance pillars and gates at the Lower Church Street entrance to the churchyard;
- A 'Welcome to Ashby' packs for new residents is to be considered;
- Possible creation of an 'Ashby in Bloom' group;
- Further initiatives to be implemented as part of our drive for Green Tourism and to address climate change.

Summary and Conclusions.

There were a number of ideas, concepts, suggestions and projects which emerged from the focus groups and public consultations which took place as part of the preparation of the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan which could not be taken forward at that time either because they fell outside of the scope of the plan or due to lack of resources.

During the spring of 2016 discussions took place with NWLDC on how it could support the Town Council's ambitions to deliver a number of projects to improve the public realm, encourage footfall, provide additional car parking capacity and enhance the heritage and visitor potential of the town's assets. The NWLDC Cabinet at its meeting on 20th September 2016 approved the allocation of £300,000 to one-off projects which supported the delivery of aspects of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the project, the town was partitioned into three 'quarters': Business Quarter, Heritage Quarter and Cultural & Leisure Quarter. Each quarter had a stakeholder group established to assist the Town Council in identifying suitable, sustainable projects which would contribute to the vision for the town.

The Project remains within budget tolerances and there remains, therefore, a balance of £35,659.16 which has been kept in reserve to resource the 'Welcome to Ashby' signs and the new brown tourism signage for the A 511.

The principal achievements of the project are:

- the re-branding of the town and the development and encouragement of brand ambassadors to create brand awareness, encourage the brand's use, support local businesses and extend the reach of the brand;
- The creation of the Cultural & Leisure Quarter with a net gain of 52 additional car parking spaces and the installation of public works of art to mark the quarter;
- Physical improvements to the public realm of the town centre;
- The appointment of a Town Centre Manager to co-ordinate the town's events programme and develop closer links with the business community;
- Purple Flag accreditation for commitment to raising standards for the night-time economy;
- The delivery of free wi-fi to the town centre;
- Physical improvements to the town's open spaces and cemetery and an application for a Green Flag Award for the Bath Grounds has been submitted;
- A major overhaul and decluttering of the signage in and around the town, including improved information for visitors;
- Development of a visitor marketing strategy for the town;
- Re-ordering of St. Helen's churchyard to enhance the experience for visitors to the church and its heritage centre.

It was proposed that this draft report was presented to a stakeholder wash-up meeting at the end of March 2020. Due to the current restrictions this will not now be possible.

Recommendation.

The Programme Board is invited to recommend to the Town Council's Finance, Tourism & Administration Committee that 'The Ashby Project' is formally closed and that all open issues are transferred to business as usual.

Jack Fargher
18th May 2020

ANNEX 'A'

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Programme Board

The Programme Board is responsible for overseeing the progress of the project and reacting to any strategic problems.

Responsibilities

- Championing the project(s) and raising awareness at senior level;
- Approving strategies, implementation plan, project scope and milestones (the project plan);
- Resolving strategic and policy issues;
- Driving and managing change through the organisation;
- Prioritising project goals with other ongoing projects;
- Communicating with other key organisational representatives;
- To review the success of the programme;
- Manage the project budget;
- Report to, and make recommendations to, NWLDC (in respect of the Cultural & Leisure Quarter) and Ashby de la Zouch Town Council (in respect of the Business Quarter and Heritage Quarter);

Programme Manager.

The Programme Manager will commission others to deliver the project(s) and champions the cause throughout the project(s). The Programme Manager will be the senior member of staff with a relevant area of responsibility that will be affected by the outcome of the project, in this case the Town Clerk of Ashby de la Zouch Town Council. He will be involved from the start of the project(s), including defining the project in conjunction with the Project Manager. Once the project has been launched, he will ensure that it is actively reviewed. The Programme Manager will be the one who has to negotiate a path through the tricky diplomatic areas of the project although the Project Manager will most likely be involved in such areas from time to time too.

Responsibilities

- Acts as champion of the project(s);
- Is accountable for the delivery of planned benefits associated with the project;
- Ensures resolution of issues escalated by the Project Manager or the Programme Board;
- Sponsors the communications programme; communicates the programme's goals to the organisation as a whole;
- Makes key organisation/commercial decisions for the project(s);
- Assures availability of essential project resources;
- Approves the budget and decides tolerances;
- Chairs the Programme Board;
- Ultimate authority and responsibility for the project(s);
- Reports to the Town Council.

Project Manager.

The Project Manager will be responsible for developing, in conjunction with the Programme Manager, a definition of the project. The Project Manager will ensure that the project(s) is/are delivered on time, to budget and to the required quality standard (within agreed specifications). He/she will ensure that the project is effectively resourced and will manage relationships with a wide range of groups and stakeholders.

The Project Manager will be responsible for managing the work of consultants (where applicable), allocating and utilising resources in an efficient manner.

Responsibilities:

- Recruiting and managing consultants;
- Managing co-ordination of the partners and working groups engaged in project work;
- Detailed project planning and control including:
 - Developing and maintaining a detailed project plan;
 - Managing project deliverables in line with the project plan;
 - Recording and managing project issues and escalating where necessary;
 - Resolving cross-functional issues at project level;
 - Managing project scope and change control and escalating issues where necessary;
 - Monitoring project progress and performance;
 - Providing status reports to the project sponsor;
 - Managing project training within the defined budget.
- Liaises with, and updates progress to, senior management;
- Managing project evaluation and dissemination activities;
- Managing consultancy input within the defined budget;
- Final approval of the design specification;
- Working closely with users to ensure the project meets business needs;
- Providing regular status reports to the Programme Board.

Stakeholder Groups Terms of Reference.

1. Cultural & Leisure Quarter Stakeholder Group.

Chairman: John Richardson (and subsequently Paul Sanders), Head of Community Services, NWLDC.

Membership:

- Ashby de la Zouch Town Council;
- Ashby de la Zouch Museum;
- Ashby Arts Festival;
- The Venture Theatre;
- Ivanhoe College;
- Lewis Charlton School;
- NWLDC Leisure Services (Hood Park Leisure Centre);
- NWLDC Cultural Services (Tourist Information Service);
- NWLDC Housing Dept. (Hood Court);
- Ashby de la Zouch Library.

Objectives: to provide an enhanced public realm which acts as a gateway to the 'Cultural and Leisure Quarter.'

NWLDC Cabinet approved the purchase of the former health centre site and approved an initial budget for the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a new short stay car park. The purchase of the site was also an opportunity to improve the street scene and public realm in the surrounding area. This included accessibility to the leisure centre and landscaping along North Street.

Due to range of assets clustered in a relatively small area it was identified that the area could be branded as the "Cultural & Leisure Quarter" of the town. This would allow increased and joint promotion of all of the assets and provide the town with a new focal point for visitors and tourists.

The proposed designs of the Cultural & Leisure Quarter included the following:

- Demolition of the former health centre site;
- Construction of a 60-space short stay car park;
- Potential installation of electric car charging points;
- New pedestrian crossings;

- A widened entrance to the leisure centre including a new cycle path;
- Improved signage on North Street and on the leisure centre;
- Consideration of a sculpture/feature to depict the gateway to the cultural & leisure quarter;
- Enhanced landscaping to turn some of the black to green;
- New gates to the Leisure Centre.

2. Heritage Quarter Stakeholder Group.

Chairman: Karen Edwards, Deputy Town Clerk, Ashby de la Zouch Town Council.

Membership:

- Tom Woodhouse **Ashby Castle**;
- Ken Ward **Ashby Civic Society**;
- Chris Tandy **Ashby History Group**;
- Claire Birch **Friends of the Bath Grounds**;
- David Bigby **Friends of the Bath Grounds**;
- Daphne Robinson **NWLDC**;
- Anne Bourne **Ashby Tourist Information Centre**;
- Wendy Freer **Pudding Bag Productions**;
- Wendy May **NWLDC**;
- Susan Boardman-Weston **St Helen's Church Heritage Project**;
- Simon Dawson **The Royal Hotel**.

Objectives: to protect and enhance the town's heritage and open spaces.

The proposed areas for the Heritage Stakeholder Group to consider included the following:

- Conservation area;
- Community connectivity;
- Review improvements for sustainable transport solutions including:
 - pedestrians,
 - cycles,
 - vehicles
 - parking.
- Road infrastructure and signage;
- Tourist information, signage and interpretation;
- Pedestrian and cycle routes;
- Disabled access;
- Public transport.
- Community infrastructure;
- Open spaces;
- Activities for all the population including growing elderly population;
- The National Forest;
- Tourism and visitor accommodation.

3. Business Quarter Stakeholder Group.

Chairman: Kay Greenbank, Head of Economic Development, and subsequently, Christine Fisher, Chief Executive, NWLDC.

Membership:

- **Fuel Café & Juice Bar** Neil Perkins;
- **School of Sewing** Alison Smith;
- **Fair Trade** Mandy Macintosh;
- **Woodlander** Sam Hampton;

- **Food Gusto** Wes Ewing;
- **Birch Tree Gallery** Claire Birch;
- **Arriva** Simon Mathieson;
- **Kangaroo** Sharon Keevins;
- **Farmer's Market** Cathy Springthorpe;
- **Dean and Smedley** Dean O'Shea;
- **Rebound** Angela Nash & Nicky Johnson;
- **NWLDC Economic Development Officer** NWLDC.

Objectives: to improve and enhance public realm of the town centre.

The proposed areas for the Business Stakeholder Group to consider included the following:

- How to increase footfall;
- The night-time economy;
- Retail mix;
- Impact of conservation area;
- Independent specialist shops;
- Living in the town centre;
- Current retail and employment infrastructure in Ashby;
- Opportunities for growth;
- Improving the public realm of the town;
- Relationship between employment available and town population, commuting;
- Location, number and types of jobs, apprenticeships, manufacturing, retail;
- Potential links with neighbouring communities e.g. Ashby Woulds, Coalville;
- Relationship between local skill base and employment available;
- Promoting investor confidence.

ANNEX 'B'

TOWN COUNCIL VISION FOR THE TOWN.

Ashby de la Zouch is a prosperous, attractive and historic market town at the heart of the National Forest. Our vision is to build on that uniqueness and create a town that meets the needs of local people whilst making the most of its special qualities to attract visitors and shoppers from further afield.

This will be achieved by creating a safe, clean, accessible and attractive town in which people can shop, work, live and pursue their leisure activities. The town should offer something for everyone regardless of their age, lifestyle or status.

We aim to:

- Be an historic market town with heritage appearance protected and a clear separation between the town and neighbouring villages;
- Be a tourist destination with a wide range of accommodation, restaurants, attractions and events;
- Provide industrial diversity with a mixed employment base;
- Have a robust infrastructure which meets the needs of residents and reduces the need to travel to neighbouring towns;
- Provide well-used and accessible public open spaces across Ashby and Blackfordby;
- An economically thriving and diverse town centre shopping experience which meets the day to day needs of residents;
- Support a functional transport infrastructure which effectively manages traffic flows and supports the use of public transport and cycling and walking;
- Maintain a balanced night time economy which attracts all ages in to a town centre where they feel safe;
- Accommodate a wide range of housing provision that meets the needs of the whole of the community. Including affordable housing, adequate social housing and town centre living;
- Encourage a clear sense of community identity, with an active voluntary sector and a range of community groups and facilities.