

## **Market Rasen Town Council - Three Year Strategy**

### **Community Engagement and Progress Report**

#### **1 Introduction**

The Town Council's Three-Year Strategy was adopted in draft form at Full Council on 10th January 2018. The Strategy was considered by West Lindsey District Council's Prosperous Communities Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> January and will be considered by WLDC Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> July. This Committee will consider the recommendation from Prosperous Communities for funding to support the capital growth projects within the Strategy and the transfer of office space at the Festival Hall. Four requirements for this Committee are:

- The growth projects have been identified
- There is evidence of consultation and support for the Strategy
- There is an agreed implementation mechanism e.g. a CIO
- Suitable financial regulation is in place

It was agreed that the Town Council would carry out a series of engagement and listening events with community groups, residents and interest groups on the Strategy's objectives prior to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting. This report details the engagement activities and their findings undertaken by the Town Council from January 2018 to July 2018.

Additionally, it was agreed that the Town Council would further explore setting up a social enterprise, independent of the Town Council, to deliver key projects in the Strategy<sup>1</sup>. Progress on this is included under point 3 of this report.

In order to inform West Lindsey's Policy and Resources Committee, the report gives an update on progress with the key growth projects in the Strategy, i.e.: The Festival Hall, The Old Police Station and Market Place. Progress on relocating the Town Council's office function to WLDC's office space at the Festival Hall is reported on in item 6 and the Town Council's arrangements for financial management of any grant funding allocated are outlined in item 5.

#### **2 Engagement on the Strategy**

##### **2.1 Approach and Methods**

Four open meetings were held where residents, businesses and representatives from community groups could drop in and ask questions about the Strategy. These were held on Saturday markets and at the Annual Town Meeting (evening). Special interest groups, were invited to discussion group meetings for a more in-depth consideration of the draft Strategy. Councillors and the project officer were present at these events and a Summary Document [Appendix 2] was made available.

- <sup>1</sup> Festival Hall Development
- Old Police Station Development
- Town Heritage Projects
- Town 'Live' Events and Visitor Economy
- Business Development
- Green Spaces and Health Promotion

A short survey was made available [Appendix 1] asking for feedback on the three main capital projects within the Strategy: Festival Hall, Old Police Station and Market Place / High Street. The Survey was distributed at the open events and was available on line via Survey Monkey <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3TCLMVD> and via a link on the Town Council’s website. The draft Strategy was uploaded to the Town Council’s website.

## 2.2 Events Held

Date	Group	Location	Description
Thursday 22 February	Festival Hall Stakeholder Group	Festival Hall	Discussion and question and answer on the draft survey
Saturday 3 March	Town Meeting	Church Room, Market Place	Drop-in session for public
Wednesday 7 March	WLDC, Lincolnshire County Council and Town Council (officers and councillors)	Festival Hall	Open discussion on the draft survey in wider county policy context
Tuesday 3 April	Rasen Hub and MRTC Councillors	Advocate Arms	Initial discussion about tenancy of Old Police Station
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> April	Annual Town Meeting	Festival Hall	Strategy objectives highlighted in Annual Report. Q and A opportunity
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup> May	Town Council officers and councillors	Festival Hall	Discussion about Strategic Priority – Market Place and High Street
Saturday 2 June	Gardeners’ Fair	Market Place	Survey on Strategy Priorities and Q and A for public
Saturday 23 June	Bric a Brac Market	Market Place	Survey on Strategy Priorities and Q and A for public

## 2.3 Feedback and Analysis

### 2.3.1 Survey

55 surveys were completed (by 13<sup>th</sup> June) the headline findings to date are:

72% of respondents agreed with the regeneration of the Festival Hall being a priority project

There was less support for the development of the Old Police Station into a community and heritage hub, with 49% supporting and 33% against the proposed project. However, it is recognised that there is less awareness about the project to develop the Old Police Station since this has been a more recent development initiated by the Town Council. Comments from those who were not sure or in disagreement included the view that the building is too far from the town centre to be a community hub; others thought that it would be a ‘waste of money’. However, there were very positive comments about the ‘jewel in the crown’ of the town’s architectural heritage and support for a visitor and tourist information hub.

There was strong feeling about the market place and the need to improve the physical space as well as bring more life to the town with special markets and events. 85% of respondents supported this project. There were a lot of comments too about the need for a market 'put the market back into Market Rasen' to echo the MR BIG Portas Pilot promise. However, it should be noted that respondents and residents generally may not be aware of the true costs to the Town Council of providing a market three times a week.

General feedback from the survey highlighted the following concerns from respondents which can be grouped under three main areas

**(i) Attracting visitors, Branding, Signage**

Events and markets - a need for more town events throughout the year to attract visitors and residents alike. Showcase the Market Place to better effect.

What makes Market Rasen unique, showcase the shops and businesses better.

Signage – improvements needed to indicate car parking and the town's attractions to visitors

**(ii) Appearance and Public Space**

High Street – a strong feeling that the shops and business premises need improving to present the town in a better light.

Strong feeling that the Market Place needs improving as the focal point of the town.

**(iii) Traffic, Transport, Jobs**

A call for better transport connections to jobs; apprenticeship opportunities.

Traffic management – a perception that the traffic flows through the town and people are not encourage to stop to discover the town.

**(ii) Feedback from Festival Hall Stakeholder Group on 22<sup>nd</sup> February**

Notes from the meeting are attached in Appendix 3. The main points made by the Group were their concerns about the legal status and structure of any new organisation to take forward the proposed projects: there was consensus that this should be independent of the Town Council. There was agreement that it would be challenging to find volunteer directors / trustees with the skills, time and experience required to run the proposed social enterprise. There was strong support for an independent organisation to manage the Festival Hall and Old Police Station projects but limited to the activities and events, with the Town Council retaining responsibility for maintenance and insurance aspects of the buildings.

**2.3.2 Feedback from Meeting of Town Council on 17<sup>th</sup> May**

The Town Council and officers met to discuss the future of the Market Place and High Street in the context of the Strategy.

Points, concerns and ideas discussed included:

- The Market Place is the central meeting point of the town, but it is 'hidden'
- The cost to the Town Council of a market three times a week
- Proposal that Tuesday be the main focus for the weekly market and resources put into marketing and branding this as Market Rasen's market day

- Re-configure the Market Place space to present a more inviting appearance; consider restricting car parking to create a more 'continental' market space
- A focal point needed for the space – for example a flagpole
- Better signage and advertising of the high street shops and businesses is needed
- Improved signage and 'branding' of the town from the road entrances

### **2.3.3 Conclusions on Feedback from Engagement on the Strategy**

The aims of the Strategy and the main projects identified have been broadly very well received with support for the development of the Festival Hall, improvements to the Market Place and townscape and a strong appetite for community and visitor events to showcase the town. There has been less enthusiasm for the development of the Old Police Station into a heritage / community hub; however, this project has been less publicised than the other development projects. There is strong support from individuals and groups (heritage, tourism businesses) who share an interest in the building's development.

## **3 Progress on Implementation Mechanism**

The draft Strategy proposed that a social enterprise structure e.g. CIO take responsibility for the delivery of the growth projects.

### **3.1 Feedback**

Feedback from the engagement events is supportive of an independent group to be responsible for elements of the projects – e.g. the OPS and Festival Hall to have a committee / project group leading the activities taking place, but with the Town Council retaining responsibility for the legal, insurance and maintenance aspects of the buildings. Feedback from stakeholders and town councillors is that it will be difficult to appoint volunteer directors / trustees with the time and required skills and experience to run an independent company such as a CIO. The Town Council recognises that setting up a separate organisation to run the growth projects will be time and resource consuming.

### **3.2 Proposed way forward**

The Town Council is taking a pragmatic view with regard to the delivery mechanism for the projects by continuing to push the three projects forward whilst building up the volunteer base associated with each of the three projects. The Council does not want to jeopardise progress by putting time and energy into setting up an independent organisation which may then founder due to lack of support. For each of the growth projects the way forward is proposed as follows:

### **3.3 Festival Hall**

The existing group of volunteers and stakeholders to be formalised and a constituted management committee formed (timeline from September to December 2018). Live music and theatre events at the Hall have built up good audiences over the last eighteen months. A small but dedicated team of volunteers works with the Project Manager to make these events a success. Volunteers include a sound and lighting engineer and a theatre company director.

The proposed management committee will take on all aspects of event management at the Hall including booking live acts, promotion and artist liaison. Support from the Town Council will be assured with the existing Bookings Clerk working to the committee. The Council will continue to be responsible for all aspects of work related to the maintenance and insurance of the Hall.

### **3.4 The Old Police Station**

A tenant has come forward to take over the areas of the building currently occupied by the Town Council. It is proposed that Market Rasen Development Trust (The Hub) will relocate from their premises in Union Street and take on the responsibility for managing the community and heritage activities at the OPS. The Hub will work with Rase Heritage to The Town Council will retain responsibility for the building and the management of the tenancy with BUPA dentist. The Town Council will work with the Hub and other partners to apply for funding to support the development of the OPS into an exhibition and heritage space, also to develop the building into the town's Tourist Information Centre.

**3.5** The Market Place – The Town Council will continue to lead on this project whilst building on the positive partnership working with stakeholders including charity groups (Lions, Rotary) and town businesses to stage six to eight events / markets each year, showcasing the Market Place as the focus of the town to attract visitors as well as local people.

#### **4 Update on Growth Projects**

The Strategy identifies 3 key growth projects and these have received broad support through the engagement activities carried out. The Festival Hall and Old Police Station projects have been underway for three years and one year respectively; the Market Place has been adopted as the third growth project following the feedback from the engagement activities described in this report.

##### **4.1 Festival Hall**

(i) Live music and theatre events continue to grow audiences, with 11 live music nights held over two years of the project. Private hire of the Hall has increased as a result of improved promotion and new visitors to events spreading the word. New initiatives supported by the Town Council over the past year include ballroom dance classes in partnership with the learning provider CLIP and a volunteer-run youth club.

(ii) The main concern with the fabric of the building is the asbestos pitched roof which needs replacing. A roofing contractor inspected the pitch roof on June 13<sup>th</sup> and estimates the cost of removal and a new roof to be up to £60K. The Town Council will be issuing a tender for the work shortly.

##### **4.2 Old Police Station**

(i) As mentioned in 3.4 above the Town Council is in discussions with Market Rasen Development Trust (The Hub) to become the new tenant of the Old Police Station. Informal discussions in January have now been put on a formal footing and it is envisaged that the Hub will move into the Old Police Station towards the end of 2018 / early 2019, depending on minor works and decorating to be carried out once the Town Council offices move out. As part of the Old Police Station growth project, the Hub will work with the Town Council to create the town's tourist information / heritage hub and community outreach centre at the Old Police Station.

(ii) Following on from the Project Manager's meetings and discussions over the past year with Heritage Lincolnshire, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund, a tender was published in March 2018 for a costed conditions survey and options appraisal of the Old Police Station. Scorer Hawkins Architects of Horncastle were awarded the contract and their report will be presented to the Town Council in the next few weeks.

(iii) A full calendar of events and exhibitions is in place for the remainder of 2018:

- Equali-Tea Democracy Debate – 1<sup>st</sup> July
- Wolds Women of Influence Historical Exhibition – June to August
- Heritage Open Day – Picture the Past - 8<sup>th</sup> September
- Jayne Cooper’s Rebel Daughters <http://www.jaynecooperpaintings.com/> Suffragette themed exhibition – September to October
- Bastions of the Air – WW1 Aviation exhibition – Remembrance weekend to early December

(iv) It is envisaged that as part of the growth project, the Hub will form a volunteer group (Friends of the Old Police Station) and to work with partners such as Rase Heritage to manage the exhibitions and events at the Old Police Station

#### **4.3 Market Place**

(i) Markets and events continue to attract residents and visitors to the town:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> June - Gardeners’ Fair
- 23 June - Bric a Brac Market
- 1<sup>st</sup> July – Equali-Tea Democracy Event <https://equaliteas.org.uk/event/100-years-of-democracy-tea-party/>
- Town Live and Heritage Open Days – 8<sup>th</sup> September

Community support has been very good and there is an appetite for more town events, with the Market Place as a focal point.

(ii) The WLDC sponsored Footfall Sensor initiative is working well and has had a positive spin off through Project Manager’s connection with the Local Data Company and Matthew Hopkinson (Report Author) at Didobi Limited: with Market Rasen featured as a town case study in the Grimsey Report 2 <https://www.didobi.com/grimsey-review-2/>. The Report will be published on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018.

Data from the sensors has been used by the Town Council to show the effect on footfall from town events: the WW1 history event at the Old Police Station in November 2017 showed a 40% increase in footfall and the Christmas Market a 50% increase. The evidence from the footfall sensors is a valuable tool in promoting the benefits of the Town Council’s promotion and investment in town events and markets.

(iii) The Chairman of the North Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Community Rail Partnership addressed the Town Council Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018. The Partnership is keen to work with the Town Council to improve the connectivity of Market Rasen (increase the frequency of the train service, improve bus links to Louth and beyond); their aims chime with those set out in Strategic Priority 5 ‘Transport and Access’. The Council is looking forward to working with the Partnership to further their ambitions for Market Rasen.

(iv) Engagement with shops and businesses continues on a day-to-day basis. The Town Council will continue to engage with the town’s shops and businesses. As part of the setting up of a management committee for the Festival Hall the Town Council will be contacting local businesses with a view to recruiting volunteer trustees.

## **5 Financial Regulation**

A discrete budget will be set up with cost centres for each growth project. The Town Council’s Resource and Finance Officer will manage all financial aspects of any grant funding allocated by West Lindsey. Monthly reports on the three growth projects will be presented to the Town Council’s

Finance and Facilities Committee. A suitable arrangement for appropriate financial reporting to West Lindsey will be agreed.

## **6 Town Council Office Relocation to the Festival Hall**

Steps have been taken to move the Town Council office function from the Old Police Station to the vacated WLDC offices at the Festival Hall. The office relocation is part of the Town Council's Strategy to develop the Festival Hall into the town's civic and entertainment venue. There are significant benefits to moving the office from the Old Police Station, including: better access and parking at the Festival Hall; more office space; releasing space at the Old Police Station for a community / heritage hub as identified in the Town Strategy.

The Town Council Clerk met with Gary Reeve, Team Manager Property & Assets, on 16<sup>th</sup> May and with colleague Chris Drury on 13<sup>th</sup> June. The Town Clerk met with Town Council office staff on 23<sup>rd</sup> June to consider the office space and their requirements. These findings are included in a report from the Deputy Chairman Stephen Bunney is attached as Appendix 4.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Survey on the Strategy's Capital Projects**

The Town Council has three big projects for Market Rasen over the next few years: The Festival Hall, Old Police Station and Market Place.

Are these are the right priorities for the town?

<b>Project</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Festival Hall				
Old Police Station				
Market Place				

What would improve Market Rasen? Shops and high street, jobs, health and leisure, events ..... tell us what you think:



Optional contact details:

Name	
Email	
Telephone Number	

The Town Council's Draft Three Year Strategy is available to see on the Council's website

<http://parishes.lincolnshire.gov.uk/MarketRasen/section.asp?catId=36811> and in person at the Town Council Offices (Open Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri 10.30 am to 1.30 pm or by appointment).

Phone 01673 842479, email [townclerk@marketrasentc.co.uk](mailto:townclerk@marketrasentc.co.uk)

***Thank you for completing the survey.***

***Please return to:***

Market Rasen Town Council

The Old Police Station

Dear Street

Market Rasen

## THE VISION

**“to build a strong and vibrant community”**

around the following strategic priorities:

- ENVIRONMENTAL AND HERITAGE – making Market Rasen and attractive place, to live, work and visit.
- HEALTH AND WELLBEING – addressing poor health outcomes and social vulnerability.
- LEISURE AND CULTURE – a wide choice of music, entertainment, theatre and live events.
- DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMY developing the housing, business and commercial capacity for future growth and to address skill deficits.
- TRANSPORT AND ACCESS – influencing responsible bodies to deliver good quality and affordable services and transport links for residents and businesses.

## DELIVERY

will be by a **Charitable Incorporated Organisation [CIO]**, set up by the stakeholders.

- a non-profit making organisation
- no financial risk to trustees
- supported by stakeholders
- free from council and company red tape
- can apply for grants and financing not available to Councils

**‘Team work from bottom up is the key to success’**

## Micro Gains

**‘Giant oak trees from small acorns grow’**

Some of the events that are now occurring regularly in MR

- Music / Theatre / Dance events in The Festival Hall
- Local Youth Club set up
- Special Markets
- Heritage Exhibitions at OPS, The Hub, Library
- Sports Centre and Skate Park
- Green space

## Opportunity

Planning Gain from 640 dwellings Central Lincolnshire Plan

£200K + Capital Investment from WLDC over 3 years

Market Rasen Development Trust, Rase Heritage Society, Market Rasen Council.

**Festival Hall Stakeholder Group – Meeting to consider draft Strategy on 22 February 2018****Points made (taken from notes of the meeting, item 3).****3 Discussion**

The meeting was opened up to a general discussion and questions were welcomed on the Vision document. The main discussion points related to the proposed establishment of a new delivery vehicle to take forward the Vision, as follows:

- The legal status and structure of the new organisation will need careful thought and planning. It would be useful to have some options of possible structures for a further discussion: for example, number of trustees and structure of the organisation (e.g. whether there would be an 'advisory' board to guide a more operational delivery group).
- The recruitment of trustees / directors could be a challenge. The responsibility of the positions would be significant and such arrangements are usually voluntary and not remunerated.
- It was agreed that the CIO would need to balance having representation from across the town's community with running an efficient decision-making organisation.
- Grant funding: SB confirmed that the funding from West Lindsey would be in grant form and would not need to be paid back. Volunteer directors / trustees would not be exposed to financial risk – the legal constitution of the organisation would ensure this was the case.
- There was strong feeling from the group that the new organisation be independent of the Town Council. SB concurred and stated that although the Town Council would have representation on the CIO (or equivalent) that it would not be leading or directing but would be an equal partner with other representative groups. [Post-meeting addendum to the Vision document: Point 7.1 final sentence to be amended to read: *'The Town Council will continue to use its duties and powers to fulfil its procedural and civic responsibilities and will have representation on the CIO'*]
- A potential third capital project was suggested: 'Green and Public Open Spaces'.

**Market Rasen Town Council: Proposed Office Move to Festival Hall Office Wing****Ownership/Financial Responsibilities**

It is proposed that Market Rasen Town Council take over the responsibility for the current, empty, suite of offices at the Festival Hall. The ownership of the office wing, including the roof solar panels, to be transferred; the whole Festival Hall building and site will then be in the ownership of The Town Council. If this is not possible/practical a second, less satisfactory, option is that the office wing be leased at a peppercorn rent to Market Rasen Town Council.

Before the transfer of responsibilities is made West Lindsey District Council will make sure that the office wing is at a sound and suitable standard for office and public use. Once the transfer is activated Market Rasen Town Council will take maintenance, internal and structural, and utility charges for the office wing.

Market Rasen Town Council will benefit from the free electrical energy produced by the solar panels on the roof. They accept that they will need to negotiate with WLDC who retains any feedback tariffs, or the like, earned from the grid.

MRTC are happy to host the existing free community Wi-Fi arrangements on the same terms as enjoyed by other local communities.

The Town Council are prepared for the move to take place as soon as possible but anticipate a four to six week lead period may be required to sort out wiring, phone/data contracts etc. The Town Clerk has drawn up a proposal for use and details of the infrastructure and equipment required. They have also identified the various services that will be required and how these link in with the providers at the existing offices at The OPS.

**Plans for use**

MRTC undertake to reserve at least one of the current small rooms for use by WLDC, LCCC or other public authorities as a meeting room for their employees to meet with Market Rasen Residents. MRTC officers will maintain and operate an on line booking system for this service. It and photocopying facilities will be made available to visiting officers. It is anticipated that these meetings will take place during normal MRTC office hours – in which case they will not involve a charge. MRTC and LCC employees will have access to all cloakroom and kitchen facilities.

MRTC are happy for WLDC, LCCC to maintain terminals with fixed phone/data lines to their main offices, if they so wish. These terminals will be at the appropriate authorities cost [not electrical power].

**Initially**, MRTC will use the rooms and reception areas as they are currently operated. They will equip the rooms using accordingly, bringing furniture from the office suite at The Old Police Station. Where necessary new furniture will be purchased. MRTC is prepared to look at any of WLDC's furniture and fittings that are surplus to requirement. [Terms to be negotiated].

MRTC will install an integrated multi line phone and data system throughout the office wing.

**In time**, MRTC may well adjust the entrance and reception areas to the Office Wing and Festival Hall. This will be undertaken as part of The Market Rasen Three Year Strategy.