

North Walsham Town Council

September 28 2021, Meeting

Report - District Councillors 'North Walsham Liberal Democrats'

Community Renewal Fund

As part of the Government's budget announcements on March 3rd 2021 a Community Renewal Fund (CRF) of £220 million was announced to support community renewal. North Norfolk was one of 100 priority areas eligible to apply to the CRF. The District Council submitted bids for Fakenham and North Walsham. Each bid was worth £800k with the District Council contributing 25 per cent of the funding. The time scale for submitting bids was tight (draft bids had to be submitted to the County Council as the lead authority by May 7th). The Town Council was involved in the consultation on the bid with the Mayor chairing a consultative meeting. The North Walsham bid was centred on preparatory work for the proposed housing growth on the western side of the town.

The bid was submitted to the County Council on the required date of May 7th and after further discussions with the County Council they submitted the bid for North Walsham as required on June 14th. The Government advised that decisions on the bids would be made by July 31st with the awarded fund having to be spent by March 31st 2022. As at the time of this report no decision has been made by the Government on the CRF bids. Inquiries are being made on the situation, but no clear answer has been received.

A lot of work was involved with the bids made by the District Council which had to be done to tight timescales. It is disappointing that no decision has been forthcoming two months after the promised date.

Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) Project

This project is now at a critical stage in terms of final consultations, preparatory work on Cedar House/Town Centre improvements and Building Improvement Grants. A lot of planning work is taking place against the need for a significant part of the funds for this project to be spent in the current financial year (ends 31/3/2022).

On Cedar House the technical specification for the refurbishment works is expected to be complete by early October. The procurement process for the works can then commence and the aim is that work can start in early 2022. On the proposed plans for the town centre; exhibitions, an online survey and meetings are taking place at the current time. Preparatory work is continuing and currently Norfolk County Council Highways Department are indicating that part of New Rd car park could become a bus interchange. If this is feasible then it will facilitate any removal of buses from Market Place and overcome the long standing traffic issues created by the bus pick up points in the vicinity of the Post Office.

The District Council is also adding additional Officer resources to the project. The Council surveyor (Neil Turvey) will now work almost exclusively on project works and a dedicated communications officer for the project (Catherine Wedge Clark) is now in place.

Dual Use Sports Centre

The centre is re-opening on October 1st having been closed since the start of the pandemic.

EGS

27/9/21