

Report to Council, 7 September 2020

Report of Vision Group

Background

1. The Town Council has decided to develop a Community Vision setting out aspirations for Ellesmere in the years ahead and to provide a framework for the Council's priority and budgetary planning.
2. In January this year, the Town Council hosted two evening events at which a wide range of invited community organisations were represented. The Mayor explained that the purpose of the event was to generate ideas to help shape a Vision for Ellesmere in 2030. Participants worked in each of six themed groups with Town Councillors acting as facilitators.
3. Over 500 suggestions were made during the two evenings. These were categorised on the basis of costs, achievability and the most appropriate body to progress them, whether the Town Council or another organisation.
4. From this process, an initial list of eleven "quick win" issues were identified and selected as pilots. These were reported to the July Council meeting. Progress has been made on a number of those issues, including the production of a welcome leaflet for new Ellesmere residents. A copy of the proposed leaflet is attached and Council is requested to approve it for distribution via local estate agents and solicitors, as well direct from the Town Council. Costs of production will be met from existing budgets.
5. Unfortunately, Covid 19 has hampered progress on progressing initiatives. Meetings with interested parties have not always been possible as many organisations have been in a reduced state of activity. However, work on the pilots will continue and further reports will be brought to Council for approval as appropriate.

Resident involvement by questionnaire

6. While the list of 500 plus suggestions will prove invaluable as the Vision process continues, the Vision Group recognised that the January meetings were only a starting point and that it was both necessary and good practice to involve residents more generally in developing the Vision. The Group consider that a questionnaire aimed at Ellesmere residents would be an effective, initial way of achieving this and have been developing a draft which Council is now asked to approve.
7. A copy of the proposed questionnaire is attached.
8. Inevitably it is not possible to ask all the questions that might be of interest and relevance while keeping the questionnaire within a reasonable length. Also, the level of questions posed throws up difficult choices. Too generalised and the results may not be of much value. Too detailed and it is difficult to cover all the areas of interest. Compromise is necessary and the Group hope the right balance has been achieved.
9. The intention is that the questionnaire will be available in two formats and modes of completion.

10. First, a printed version of the questionnaire will be hand delivered to every residence in Ellesmere. The aim will be to do so at the beginning of October after most summer holidays have ended and the new school arrangements have had an opportunity to settle down. The Covid 19 leaflets were hand delivered to every residence in Ellesmere so we know it can be achieved using Councillors and, if needed, volunteers.

11. Second, the questionnaire will also be available on-line at the Town Council's website. Microsoft Forms will be used, a free service. The objective will be to maximise the number of on line responses.

12. Publicity for the questionnaire, both initially and by way of reminders, will be given via the ETC website, Ellesmere Community News Facebook page, and by articles in the local press. The only direct cost to the Town Council will be that of printing the hard copy questionnaires.

13. Respondents will be given approximately one month to complete the questionnaire. The responses will be collated using a combination of Town Councillors and Town Hall staff.

14. If the response level is low then there is the option to supplement responses through face to face interviews using Town Councillors.

15. The aim will be to provide a report on the survey to the December meeting of the Council. Information from the survey together with suggestions from the January events should enable a draft Vision statement to be developed so as to assist 2021/22 budget and priority decisions.

16. Finally, the Group want to express its thanks to Ben Reincke for his continuing support in helping take this work forward despite resigning as a Councillor last May.

Financial Implications

17. The costs associated with both the Welcome leaflet and the residents' questionnaire will be contained within the 2020/21 budget.

Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- approve the Welcome to Ellesmere leaflet (Para 4)
- approve the residents' Questionnaire (Para 7), the arrangements for seeking the views of residents and the timetable for the survey (Para 9 – 14) and further report to Council (Para 15).

Nick Cull
on behalf of Vision Group