

STALYBRIDGE

TOWN TEAM

Working together for Stalybridge

Chair's Annual Report: 6th September 2018

Ray Harrison, Chair

Chairs Introduction

This is my first annual report as Chair of the Town Team.

Firstly, I would like to thank the previous Chair Peter Rawson for his time as chair, Peter helped to make some new and benefiting changes and had some good connections with TMBC which proved to be a great help for the town Centre, he still continues to be a valued member and arranges the monthly clear ups and communicates with the Canal and River Trust and reports information back to STT.

There have been some changes in the last twelve months to the new Stalybridge Town Council which was formed in 2017, it has now changed to the Stalybridge Neighborhood Forum. It is still unclear what the new forum's role will consist of and if there is any funding within the forum to assist the Town Team on community spending in the town Centre. It is difficult for the Town Team to create enough financial resources for us to continue spending in the town Centre. We need to look at new ways of fund raising to make Stalybridge a prettier place to **shop, work and live**. S.W.L.

We have had a very busy 12 months promoting and making improvements to the town center. We have made some good progress with our plans.

As a volunteer team ourselves the Town Team understands it is not easy to fit in periods of volunteering with our everyday lives. Seeking and retaining a high level of volunteer support is no easy task and, although we have a significant number of volunteers on our database, it is quite often the familiar faces that we see at our clear ups and other events. We are indebted to all of our volunteers who give so freely of their time for the benefit of everyone.

Our Town Team

Our Executive Committee (EC) currently comprises a group of dedicated volunteers. Their significant input is testament to the dedication of the whole team for the benefit of the Community. They work tirelessly in a great effort to improve the town Centre.

Our Current Members are

Andrew Watkins, Treasurer, Local Resident
Christopher Tyler, Local Resident
Peter Rawson Local Resident
Councillor Adrian Pearce
Councillor Clive Patrick
Councillor David Sweeton, Communications Officer
Councillor Sam Gossling,
Jacqui Watkins, Faith Communities Representative
Nicola Buckley, Vice Chair Business Community
Ray Harrison, Chair, Business Community
Heather Burthom, Business Community
Tony Lewis, Business Community

This is not an autocratic organisation and members' views are encouraged. All issues are debated thoroughly at our meetings which provides for a healthy, democratic and effective environment. Where we need to encourage new proactive committee members.

What the Town Team promotes

- Focused on things that will help build sustainable growth in the town centre.
- Worked closely with the Council/Town Council, now Neighborhood Forum and other partners to achieve the best outcome possible for the town.
- Look to foster closer ties with the business community and provide advice for new and existing businesses.
- Helped facilitate delivery of quality events which bring footfall and visitors to our town Centre.
- We now regularly open the Civic Hall under STT's name and work in partnership with the craft festival.
- We constantly promote to open and make public use of the Civic Hall.
- Making the town Centre a prettier and better place to shop-work-live S.W.L.

Sub-Groups Summary

Our plans are progressed through the following sub-groups which are regularly reviewed and updated at our monthly meetings.

These groups are:

- Business
- Communication
- Greenspace/In Bloom
- Events
- Fundraising/ Finance
- Schools Liaison
- Planning

Business

With changing times throughout the whole Country means all self-employed traders and shopkeepers need keep to their business's moving in a forward direction, blame is sometimes placed on the internet for consumers purchasing goods, but every small town is in the same position we must all think of new ideas and keep up with market trends.

In Stalybridge we have many good and ambitious traders who have been successful for many years as one shop may close there is always someone new wanting to be self employed and take over the empty unit, if rents are kept fair which I think Stalybridge as realistic rents this will keep the premises occupied.

We also need the traders to help make the Centre a prettier place to shop they may have to help and be involved with the flower planters and Christmas lights if everyone does a little we all create a lot.

There will be approximate 8 new shops due to open in Armentieres square in 2018/9 which will improve the area.

We have good support from our town team representatives to the business's and they can always rely on good advice from our team members.

Communications

Our new web site has recently become live and now hosts some exciting coverage, Nicola Buckley, our Vice Chair continues to carry out great work on inputting of events, notices and interesting items on the web site.

Also, our Facebook page is updated regular by our communications officer Councillor Dave Sweeton Facebook now has many followers, photos are constantly down loaded of news and events also of our volunteer's clean up sessions. We have Wi Fi in the

town Centre which was introduced by TMBC this can be used in the main central streets of the town Centre it is hard to know how much usage is used by the public as there is little feedback in general, but this still must be a benefit for the customers who come to Stalybridge. We have also had radio coverage by Tameside radio when certain events have been put on in Stalybridge this is aired to thousands of listeners to promote the town. Some of the events covered were The Craft Markets by Lisa Park, Christmas lights switch on, Carnival Festival, Artisan markets.

Greenspace / In Bloom

This year we have had new ideas for creating In bloom the town team have had new hardwood planters made and positioned them in Armentieres square which have created beautiful flower areas other traders have had hanging baskets made and corporation street alone had 16 baskets.

Peter Rawson works closely with the Canal and River Trust (CRT) to improve the environment and landscaped areas alongside the canal. We have worked on the large old vegetable plots near to the steel cabin. These was planted with bedding plants earlier this year which were kindly donated to us. The town Centre is a totally alien environment for the Canada Geese, they are grazers, and feeding them with bread is not good for their health; encourages vermin and pollutes the water.

We continue to organize monthly clear up sessions primarily along the canal but also in parts of the town centre. There are over 100 volunteers listed on our database and we regularly have 15 to 20 people attending. I believe the volunteers have made a real difference with this particularly along the canal where there is no publicly funded routine for the collection of litter.

Our blue volunteers' cabin in Tesco's car park is in very poor condition and is becoming an eyesore in what is a very prominent location in the town. We are now able to replace the cabin and build a photographic image on each side to make it blend in with the area. The estimated cost of a suitable replacement is £8000, we have already received £4000 and a further additional £2000 was kindly donated from CRT towards the cost and have also successfully obtained a £2000 grant from the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme we will have the new cabin during 2018.

Events

STT have now arranged events in the civic hall under their own name in relationship with Lisa Park who owns the craft festival there are about 7 events per year held by Lisa which helps to bring an increased footfall into the town on Saturdays.

Councillor Leanne Feeley with TMBC have arranged a month in September of activity's around 'Tameside and on Sunday 16th September there will be a suffragette's day in the civic hall so good to see the hall being used as much as possible.

More needs to be done to open the civic hall more often and efforts to campaign are always ongoing our local town team councillors carry out good work in supporting us, we require more events we need organizers to contact us to help keep the doors open and are grateful to clubs like the motor bike club and the beer festival who use the hall every year.

The Christmas light switch on event in 2017 was a huge success in association with the town council we helped to preform a very grand event with a full stage and performers taking a different dimension to the normal light switch on. But more funding is required for this year if we are to have a grand event as the town team or the newly formed neighborhood forum will not have the funds to spend on the lights switch on new ideas need to be established.

We had a very sunny weekend this year for the Stalybridge weekend carnival festival 23rd and 24th June Ian Cochrane who helped arrange the weekend with help from town team members created a spectacular festival on the Saturday we had some cars in Armentieres Square. NSPCC had a family Fun Day in the Civic Hall the Carnival Parade marched on the Sunday with 'Tameside radio carrying out interviews on both days which helped to bring thousands of people into the town there were also attractions in Cheetham Park. We also had free boat trips for the weekend which was a delight for the children.

Planning and management of events is extremely time consuming and whilst the Town Team is keen to see more high-quality events in town we will need to look at alternative ways of funding, organizing and managing these in future involving all parties who have an interest in the promotion of the town.

Finance/ Fundraising

Our Treasurer has provided monthly financial updates and our governance, financial management and budgeting is a regular feature at Executive Committee meetings.

I would like to thank our Treasurer Andrew Watkins for his professional account skills and for stepping in to take the minutes of our meetings whilst we've been without a formal Secretary.

This year's accounts are summarised separately in the Treasurer's report.

To raise more funds the introduction of the new Stalybridge Town Team 100 club was established, and this has helped to bring in substantial funds we have offered prizes for the 100 club members hopefully this will continue to be successful as we attract more members the cost is £12.00 per year with a cash prize and voucher prizes donated by Tesco and The Candolim restaurant.

Schools Liaison

Christopher Tyler has led on this and has managed to establish good links with both of our Secondary schools, Copley Academy and West Hill. We now have comprehensive feedback from both institutions on what young people would like to see in town and which will help formulate a more in depth planning response when engaging with Town Centre development consultations. Whilst this is still a work in progress it is essential to the town for our future residents to be engaged in the development of a community where they would like to live and work and bring up their own families. We are also encouraging pupils to get involved in community activities i.e.: to help with our clear ups and landscaping work; to hold a stall in the Artisan Market and we'd also like to see more of their musical talents on display in the town Centre.

We invited Gary Harrison (Teacher) and 4 Westhill school pupils who came to our June meeting their input into new ideas was a pleasure to listen to from such young boys they were very enterprising we look forward to their return to a further meeting later this year.

This is a very important area of our work and is a time-consuming task, so I would like to thank Chris for all his efforts to date and for persevering with the reports.

Planning

Planning was introduced to the sub group, so we could keep a breast with the planning applications in the town centre this is so we can voice our oppions to help protect the buildings and conservations area for the standard our market town requires we only advise back to TMBC our thoughts of the application and our suggestions.

Building New Homes in the Town Centre

We are very pleased to see the derelict site of Casablanca turn into an attractive 67 apartment building with retail/commercial outlets on the ground floor overlooking the canal in Armentieres Square, this building is the new Summers Quay.

We also have a new apartment block on Castle Street, with 38 apartments currently being constructed ready for completion in the new year which will be occupied by residents of Moss Care Housing Association.

These new and future buildings will help add more footfall to our retail shops.

With these new apartment's potentially we may have an extra 200 people carrying out there weekly shopping in the town Centre.

Our Non-Political organization

At the May 2018 local election there was a new political party which stood called the *Stalybridge Town Party* this has proved somewhat confusing as we have been associated with this party and some of our good efforts of work within the town might have had the voters believe that the Stalybridge Town Party are the same as our Town Team they or not.

I have carried out press releases and voiced my opinions and made it very clear to the political party and the public that we are not in any way associated with this party now or will be in the future.

I am adamant that this party will not continue to 'piggy back' off our volunteering work ethic.

We and our volunteers have worked hard to establish a community ethos within the town which is frequently complimented on by the public and various organizations and it is not correct to mislead the public into believing that we are affiliated with this political organization.

Stalybridge Town Team has been established for over 7 years originally formed from the Mary Portas innovation scheme, the Town Teams are nationwide and are very well respected in every borough all over the country.

Chair

We still need to attract new members to the meetings your help in asking people you know who may have interest and something to contribute in joining would be of great benefit.,

I would like to thank everyone of our town team members and all the volunteers who work so hard carrying our duties within the town, I appreciate the time they give up making our community a solid unit.

The team have made great strides and improvements this year I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year we still have so much to do our journey continues.

If you have any comments regarding the report I would appreciate your comments.

Regards

Ray Harrison Chair STT