

Portfolio:	Economy & Staffing
Portfolio Holder Name:	Clr Mick Lerry
Full Council Meeting Date:	Thursday 7th December 2023
Agenda Item:	TC2023/104

Town Team

At the last Town Team meeting the Town Wardens gave a briefing on their work in the Town Centre and how they are having conversations with businesses and retailers. The Town Wardens are now involved in Business Watch, which hopefully will support businesses and retailers from ASB and any criminal activity taking place. The Town Wardens are also working with the Police and CCTV surveillance as well. Feedback from the manager of the Friday market is that the Town Wardens are having a good impact and influence, and market holders feel more comfortable with the presence of the Town Wardens. There will be a First Aid course for members of the Town Team in January and a future seminar will be on strategies to deal with awkward customers.

Bridgwater Town Council presented two awards at the Chamber of Commerce Sedgemoor Awards Event, which were sponsored by the Town Council. One award was for Community Engagement and the other was for the best Independent Business. The Careers/Jobs Convention will be held on the 17th of October 2024 at the Town Hall.

Destination website for Bridgwater is being developed by Beccy Amory. The Snowflakes Event went well and there was great footfall in the Town Centre. The Bridgwater Council Team worked hard to make sure the event went well.

Town Deal

The Town Deal Open Event was very well attended, and the community and local businesses were interested in the different projects on show. There will be a further event on the Docks in December.

Beccy Armory, Events and Outreach Manager for Bridgwater Town Deal has secured further funding from Bridgwater Town Team Town Council funds to deliver destination marketing website and socials. So far have received 6 quotes from designers starting to assemble a focus group from across Bridgwater to work on the aims of the new brand. Quayside Festival date reserved for next year with road closures, now awaiting sign off from SC as to aims and objectives of the event.

Grants Panel: 6 applicants have been given suggestions from the panel to ensure they can optimise the opportunity of the grant. Now there are 24 Activating events for 2024. All current applications are pending. The Bridgwater Step Up Project is

still waiting for premises, with the loss of Bridgwater House, the matched funding of 200K from Somerset Council will also be a loss to the project.

Carnival, Town Hall and Arts Centre and Engine Room projects are progressing; however, there could be a delay in the Theatre project due to planning. The Celebration Mile project mile project has received tenders and now awaiting Somerset Council Executive to sign off, work to progress in January 2024.

Town Deal Risk Management:

Like any programme that is delivering physical construction activity, the main risks around delivery are related to inflationary pressures on materials, availability of labour and resources, and the impact this is having on the overall industry and their approach to risk. With a few larger contractors going out of business, nationally there is a contraction of engagement, or where contractors are pricing so much risk into jobs as to make them unaffordable.

The main risks that we are tracking via the Towns Deal M&E reports are:

- Inflation
- Procurement: availability of appropriately qualified/specialist contractors. Delays caused by procurement processes.
- Planning / listed building consent
- Public consultation
- Hidden / below ground issues (Docks, Celebration Mile)

Staffing

The consultants have completed their investigations into the review of the staffing structure, regarding the possible changes due to the devolution of services and assets. The initial work has shown that there will be a need to increase the staffing of the Town Council, which will have an impact on the budget. The Staff handbook and HR document will also be reviewed by the consultants before going to the staffing committee.

Congratulations to the Town Clerk who has recently heard the news that he has been predicted a first in his degree.

Recommendations: (if you are expecting Council to make a decision from your report)

None