Middleton Culture, Leisure, Tourism, Community Cohesion & Health and Wellbeing Working Party

Minutes of Thursday 6th October 2011

Present
Councillor Jonathan Burns RMBC (Chair)
Councillor Mike Holly RMBC
Councillor June West RMBC
Lauren Mason RMBC Middleton Township Office
Jim McMahon Middleton Town Centre Management Co.
Graham Duckworth Link4Life
Peter Kilkenney Link4Life
Kevin Finnegan Link4Life
Terry Linden Link4Life/ Local Resident
Kerrie Smith RMBC
Tim Nuttall RMBC
Howard Gott RMBC
Marie Gribben Middleton Shopping Centre
Audrey Riches Middleton Civic Association
Glenda Ann Goodman Glenda Ann School of Dance
Georgina Jacques Langley Theatre Workshop
Nick Feist Middleton Parish
David Ratchford Millennium Churches Together
Stephanie Singleton Middleton Heritage & Conservation Group
Marion Beales Middleton Civic Association
Anne Marshall Middleton Popstars
Chloe Murphy Middleton Popstars
Jack Charlesworth Middleton Popstars
Geoffrey Armitage Local Resident
Beryl Dowd WRVS

Apologies
Councillor Malcolm Borris RMBC
Councillor Philip Burke RMBC
Councillor Peter Williams RMBC
Councillor Mike Holly RMBC
Councillor Teresa Fitzsimons RMBC
Councillor Neil Emmott RMBC
Councillor Alan Godson RMBC
Councillor Carol Wardle RMBC
Councillor Susan Emmott RMBC
Councillor Linda Robinson RMBC
Councillor Lil Murphy RMBC
Councillor Maureen Rowbotham RMBC
Councillor Donna Martin RMBC
Brenda Stringer Middleton Floral Arts
Tim Nuttall RMBC Tourism Officer
David Morris RMBC Heritage Officer
Christine Grimes Middleton Heritage & Conservation Group
John Taylor Link4Life

Councillor Jonathan Burns welcomed everyone to the meeting and as there were a number of new faces around the table introductions took place and the apologies as above provided.
There would also be an additional item inserted into the agenda as Item 3; Connect2Cycle Routes.

1) Minutes of the last meeting
The minutes of the meeting on 4th August 2011 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

2) Matters Arising
- Page 2, Item 5) Middleton Gardens – Terry Linden raised concern about the lack of activity with regards to the granite in Middleton Gardens being re-used elsewhere. Lauren Mason explained that the ‘friends of Boarshaw Cemetery’ had requested some of the granite benches were situated within the cemetery. A discussion has took place with Terry Flynn (Cemeteries Service) about this and Lauren advised she has explained that a report will need to be brought forward for any of the requests to re-use the granite with details of how the removal and reinstallation costs will be met. Terry advised that he has been approached for some of the benches to be situated in the Cenotaph, again Lauren Mason advised that a formal request would need to come forward for this, but that she would discuss with Mick Ripley and Middleton Councillors.

- Terry Linden raised concern about the lack of Minutes from this meeting going onto the RMBC website, Lauren Mason advised that the minutes were sent to the person who deals with this as a matter of course once minutes have been approved by the Chair. It was agreed that this concern will be taken back. (After note: the minutes of Township Meetings are loaded up onto the RMBC website as a matter of course and can be found under the Townships Area of the RMBC website - http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/about_the_council/townships.aspx. As the meeting is not a formal committee meeting of RMBC it is not felt appropriate by Committee Services for the minutes to be listed under the Committee Services section where other minutes are kept – but if possible a link will be put from the Committee Services section directing people to the Townships section)

- Page 3, Item 8) Concerns was raised about the lack of Health & Wellbeing information coming to this meeting since the group was changed to incorporate this area. Following discussions about this Peter Kilkenny agreed that he will ensure that Link4Life provide an update at future meetings (this will be added to the agenda as a standard item). Lauren Mason informed the group that should they have any requests which centre around Health & Wellbeing, that they wish to be brought to the agenda please ensure to le her know.

- Page 3, Item 8) it was reported that the heritage/ tourist open days had been a great success.

- Page 4, Item 9) Lauren Mason updated the group and advised the Bonfire would be taking place as in previous years, but at the present time was unsure of the date of Middleton’s event. Terry Linden asked if the amusements/ fair would be still be part of the event? Lauren Mason agreed to seek clarification and report back to members of this group. (After note: the event has been confirmed for Tuesday 1st November 2011 – the fair will take place as in previous years)

3) Connect 2 Cycle Pathways Update
Howard Gott introduced himself and explained that proposals for the Connect 2 network had originally been brought to Middleton Township in 2009. The project is lottery funded via Sustrans and offers around £450,000 for the project. Howard explained that the proposed route links the tow-path at Boarshaw with Middleton Town Centre. The route takes in a number of quieter roads, rather than following main roads and there is a pedestrian link route at the 24 Steps. Regarding the funding of the scheme, Howard advised that in total it was £1.7million, with over £800,000 of that from Kingsway Business Park, although a lot of the money has been spent on Kingsway itself.

Howard advised that regarding the maintenance of the routes, much of the work will be undertaken by volunteer rangers and British Waterways will continue to look after canal routes, as the right of way is a statutory necessity.

Howard explained that a ‘greenway’ is included in the town centre Masterplan from Cemetery Street, so that it would provide a link into Alkrington Woods.
Terry Linden asked about the affect on fishermen and Howard explained that the pathways had not caused any problems in other areas further north in the Borough. The pathways are a nominal 2 metre strip, clearly defined and easy to see. There are tight timescales involved and the works should be complete by March 2013.

4) THI Update
Kerrie advised that the first quarter of the THI project was now completed and two board meetings have taken place. Four councillors have now been nominated to sit on the Board. The THI office has now been set up in Long Street Methodist Church. The Project Officer and Manager are based there twice a week.

There are a number of significant pieces of work underway/ completed;

- The repairs/ restoration to the Edgar Wood Staircase and Jubilee Library are expected to be completed by the end of Phase 1 (March 2012).

- Work is taking place with the Green Volunteers to continue clearing the Old Burial Ground and a woodland grant application has been submitted, which could see works start as early as winter 2011. Any grant received would be used to complement the THI project. Community Payback Team has also been involved in the Old Burial Ground, over a three week project.

There is currently discussion taking place with private owners who are interested in bringing forward grant projects.

In September, Middleton held a ‘Golden Cluster’ open month, with all four of the listed building being opened two days per week. Following this, Visit England granted all four of the buildings Places of Interest Quality Assurance Scheme, although Members were advised that this is embargoed by Visit England until Mid October. RMBC has agreed to fund the cost of the scheme until 2014.

A ‘Lime Mortar’ event took place over the summer with builders and such was the interest it is expected that such events will be programmed in for summer 2012.

Kerrie reported that there is a budget to close Kanky Ginnel, as it is necessary to protect the work THI is carrying out. She is applying pressure to the Impact Partnership and the architect but there are certain processes to go through in order to close a ‘Right of Way’. Councillor Burns advised that this would be discussed further in a separate meeting.

Concerns were raised about longer term revenue implications for the scheme and it needs to be ensured that budgets/provisions are made to protect these assets in the long term. With regards to the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the Queen’s Coronation, Terry Linden said he had spoken to Link4Life about promoting the events and an offer was on the table. Stocks were suggested as an item for the events around the medieval weekend.

Finally Kerrie advised that a ‘Facebook’ page has now been set up, which will be used to disseminate information to interested parties and contains links to other relevant sites.

The Chair thanked the THI Team, David & Kerrie, for all their hard work in creating opportunities for the wider community to engage in the project through schemes such as Green Volunteers, Lime mortar volunteers etc.

5) Middleton Gardens Public Realm Works
Jim McMahon and Lauren Mason gave an update on the works and the effect this will have on the Christmas Lights switch on event. Terry Linden raised concerns about standing water problems outside the entrance to Middleton Shopping Centre in the Gardens and also the area outside Rumpling. Jim McMahon responded that he had had confirmation about the drainage from the contractors and Middleton Shopping Centre was happy with this.
6) Tourism Officer Update

It was reported that Councillor Burns had written to Tim Nuttall, the Tourism Officer, with the group’s concerns about the Visitor Guide. Tim confirmed that he had also received a detailed list of the issues from Christine Grime the day after the meeting in August. He explained that the guide had been published on an ad-hoc basis and used to be produced by a private company in Halifax. This means that it relies heavily on people returning information. It was decided in 2011 to go for a new style, an opportunity to try something new. A larger version would be more expensive to send out and not as bag friendly. He confirmed that production was overseen in house. Councillor Burns advised that the main concerns were that it was heavily weighted in favour of Rochdale, plus the group had not seen any draft versions where mistakes could have been corrected. The itinerary at the back suggests Middleton to Rochdale to Heywood to Pennines. Heywood seemed to miss out the most, then Middleton and even Pennines. Audrey Riches said she felt the guide was mixed up and quite confusing. Tim advised that after a lot of discussion within RMBC this was the design chosen. A member of the group pointed out that Middleton Market was not mentioned but Tim said it was in the guide.

The group felt that as other documents in draft form came for consultation to the meetings, it was appropriate that this guide should too. Tim said that he would take the comments back but that he does not feel it would be ideal to consult 4 townships and instead suggested that a people from each township become involved. Tim said that the guide was consulted on but the members of the group said that they had never seen it.

♦ Heritage Open Days – 36 buildings took part across the Borough, Middleton Civic Association and Middleton Conservation and Heritage Group were involved. There was a long list of buildings in Middleton which took part and there were over 500 visitors.

♦ Middleton Golden Cluster Month – September 2011 – all four of the Golden Cluster buildings took part and information was sent to all North West Tourist Information points. All 4 buildings were open at the same time and packaged as a day out with Middleton Market. There were tours in all the buildings, training having been given to the volunteers and there were over 500 visitors over the month. Visit England also came to see if the venues were up to PIQAS standards and the assessor was very impressed, saying the cluster was almost unique and an example of excellence. All four buildings were awarded PIQAS status, although this was publicly embargoed until the Mayor presents the plaques on 18th October. The Council carried the cost of the accreditation and the Golden Cluster buildings are the first sites in the Borough to achieve this. The group said that this was fantastic news and that although the project had been a trial, St Leonard’s Church and the Old Grammar School were extending the open days into October. Councillor Burns reported that he had received a call about the Electric Works sign outside the Old Grammar School and how confusing this was for people looking for the Old Grammar School.

♦ The 24 steps was the only area to receive criticism and Lauren updated the group on what is being done to try to change this.

Peter Kilkenny advised that it was his view that due to the investment and increased visitor number that Middleton Arena and Middleton Market have brought into the town, it may be appropriate to a university in to look at how much wealth has been generated as the STEAM figures are very general. It was agreed that in order to fund this it may be necessary to submit a proposal to Cabinet; it was that Lauren Mason would meet with Peter Kilkenny to discuss further.

7) Event Planner

Jim McMahon advised that he is currently in discussion with Environmental Management to look at renting space in Limefields to offset the cost of the Christmas and proposing a fair in the New Year at the park.

Terry Linden was concerned about the closure of the Local Studies section at Middleton Library, a proposal that had come from the Library Service, not Link4Life. The efficiency proposals from the Council have put everyone in Libraries at risk. Kerrie Smith explained how important Local
Studies is and that is not just keeping copies of files and pictures, it needs somebody who knows about it and is experienced. The group were advised that Initial feedback is that there is more THI information about the Old Boars Head and without the studies section it would be difficult to collate this information.

On 15th Oct there is an event of groups and celebrities at the Printworks in Manchester. Ann Marshall reported that Black Lace, Chris Kaneward, Middleton Popstars, Glenda Ann School of Dance and solo singers from Middleton confirmed that they would be attending.

8) Date of Next Meeting  
The next meeting will be Thursday 1st December 2011 at Middleton Arena.