

Town Centre Forum update 14th March 2014

from the Harrow Town Centre Manager / OLF programme manager

Summary

The majority of the Outer London Fund round 2 projects will be complete as we come to the end of March. The one project remaining – Lowlands – will be delivered by the council's Engineers.

Lowlands Rec Urban Park

There have been delays in the design and construction process. The GLA has agreed that funds can be carried forward into the 2014-15 financial year. The council's term contract with Keepmoat for general construction work has now expired and there will therefore be a tender process to appoint a new builder. This procurement process should take 10-12 weeks and after allowing for mobilisation and a 20 week build it should see the project finished in the new year 2015.

St Ann's Road public realm improvements

New lamp columns are on order to replace the temporary ones and festive lighting for the new columns has been ordered by the TCM team. The access control system of electric bollards at Clarendon Road/St Ann's Road has been installed and the dedicated CCTV cameras to monitor the access point will shortly be installed on St George's centre.

New bus stands have been created on Kimberley Road and repaving work here and on Clarendon Road is being done. Highways renewal in this area is proving disruptive.

A contractor is carrying out gum and stain removal from paving in Station Road, St Ann's Road and Clarendon Road. Only part of College Road can be treated in the same way because of the current footway construction. The work is part of the council's commitment to improve cleansing in the town centre and there is an ongoing commitment to maintain this cleansing regime which is being co-ordinated by Town Centre Management and Street Cleansing.

Car Park Variable Message Signs

The signs will be installed at the end of the month and the system will be monitored by the Town Centre team.

Legible London signs

The foundations for the Legible London Signs have been completed. We anticipate the actual signs to be installed in the next couple of weeks.

Bespoke sign

The bespoke mural will soon be mounted on the external wall of St George's centre in Kymberley Road.

Quick look at past events

Harrow Food Festival Market took place from Thursday 24th October to Sunday 27th in St Ann's Road. The TCM team found a new operator for the market who were thoroughly professional in delivering a good looking, varied and vibrant market in the area between Havelock Place and the Katie statue. Customer feedback on the offer which included French Crepes, vegan bakery, Italian biscuits as well as Spanish, Japanese and Punjabi cuisines and street food was excellent.

Using the same operator, a three day more **Christmas-themed market** was held Thursday 28th November to Sunday 1st December on St Ann's Road, with again excellent customer feedback.

Harrow Christmas Party was held on Saturday 30th November 2013 and received rave reviews from everyone that attended. Aligned with the busy Christmas shopping period, the exciting celebration ran from midday to 6pm. Harrow Community Radio hosted proceedings throughout the afternoon on the main stage outside the Royal Oak, with performances from the Harrow Steel Pan Orchestra, Dhol Drummers, local X-Factor star Holly, as well as a sneak preview of Harrow Arts Centre pantomime. Street performers entertained shoppers around the town centre, and there were appearances from Bob the Builder and Peppa Pig throughout the day. Celebrations concluded with the switch on of Harrow's Christmas tree lights by the Mayor of Harrow, followed by a spectacular fireworks display from the rooftop of St George's Shopping Centre. The buzz in the town was tangible and endured for days afterwards.

Street activities and nuisances

Buskers the enforcement team are liaising with the police town team as they are being a real nuisance.

Pigeons

"Do Not Feed Pigeons" signs were installed near the Katie statue and many businesses displayed small window stickers with the Do Not Feed message. The TCM team have provided advice to pigeon feeders on several occasions and the impact was noticeable but lately the pigeon mess has crept back as we have been busy on other work. The Forum may care to note the Council has very recently decided to provide additional funding to tackle spitting and ASB.

Business Improvement District (BID) development

A lot of work went into chasing supportive businesses in the run up to the close of the BID ballot. The result was announced on 13th December with the BID securing the required overall majority YES vote and a YES vote by rateable value. Voter turnout was 41%, typical for first time BIDs. Many thanks to everyone who helped to deliver this great result for Harrow.

Since then four directors have been appointed to the BID Board – from Debenhams (as Chairman) St Ann's, St George's and Brian Cox – and more will be appointed in due course. The council is being represented on the Board by Mark Billington. A Finance & Governance committee has met a number of times to consider how staff should be employed by the BID. The Board accepted their recommendation that Andy Stubbs be appointed as Chief Executive and Louise Baxter as Finance & Operations Manager. They will commence work for the BID on 1st April and clearly this retains their enthusiasm, relationships with business and their knowledge of Harrow built up over the last two years. Debenhams are kindly providing the BID with office space. The BID has selected GJR Consulting to be the employer of the staff and a meeting has been held which identified a checklist for mobilisation activity in the early days of the BID operation. A key task is communicating with the business community.

SLA between BID and Harrow Council for activities in the town centre

Both parties are keen to agree a service level agreement that will provide a framework within which the BID can confidently go forward to organise activities and events which will benefit the town centre. This will enable forward plans to be made, secure in the knowledge that they will not be gatecrashed or crowded out by undesirable activities that undermine the efforts being made to present the town well and market it to existing and new visitors. The SLA will be drafted in the next few weeks.