

Report of analysis of responses to Public Consultation re potential community use of upstairs premises at The Arcade, Long Street, Atherstone.

Background to the consultation

Agreement for the transfer of ownership from NWBC to Atherstone Town Council was reached in 2012. It was reported in the local press that this would also promote, "greater community use of the building."

Atherstone Town Council purchased The Arcade from North Warwickshire Borough Council in 2013. The acquisition by the Town Council was reported in the local press. The following quotes were reported in The Tamworth Herald, December 21st 2013 – *"Leader of North Warwickshire Borough Council, Councillor Mick Stanley, said: "The Arcade has the potential to become an even more important and vibrant community asset for Atherstone and the surrounding villages. So, we are pleased that Atherstone Town Council will be taking ownership of and improving the facilities for the benefit of Atherstone and North Warwickshire."*

Mejar Singh Gill, Chair of Atherstone Town Council, said: "For some time, we have been looking for a central location to accommodate office space for the Town Council and to develop for local organisations."

"We have set aside funding over the years for this and hope to improve and extend the building and also apply for grants to enhance the facility."

Read more at <http://www.tamworthherald.co.uk/arcade-shops-owned-atherstone-town-council/story-20353167-detail/story.html#8taOBC3i8dWI5ODI.99>

The following extract is from Atherstone Town Council Precept Details 2014-2015, *"The Town Council has now purchased the Arcade Shop premises which, as well as accommodating the Town Council, will provide sustainable office and meeting space for community groups and organisations, as well as maintaining retail premises."*

https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/.../atherstone_town_council_spending_plans_2014-1...

In the Town Council's Newsletter published in December 2015 it stated the following, *"The Town Council is now considering the next stage in the improvement and development of the Arcade Shops, in Long Street, Atherstone. The Council wishes to consult with all organisations, and members of the public, to determine what interest there may be for the development of the upstairs areas. The intention is to provide a meeting place and/or offices for community organisations or not-for-profit activities. This may be on a regular or occasional basis. The Council also wishes to establish what requirements there may be for this area, both for facilities wanted, and availability. If you wish to take part in this consultation or have any questions please contact the Town Council offices, by phone or e-mail, or by calling at the office between 9.30am and 11.00am, any weekday. (The Old Mortuary, North Street, Atherstone, CV9 1JN) Consultation deadline: 31st January 2016."* This date was extended into the Spring of 2016.

As well as publicising the Public Consultation in the Council Newsletter the Town Clerk sent out questionnaires, dated January 4th, 2016, by post and email to local groups in the town. 29 local organisations were contacted.

The questionnaire stated that the Council “welcomes your views on the improvement and development of the Arcade Shops, Long Street, Atherstone. The intention of the council is to establish what interest and requirements there may be for the offices and meeting space, within the complex for community groups/not-for-profit-organisations.”

Responses

Organisations that responded to the public consultation were

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Friends of Atherstone Heritage
- Volunteer Centre North Warwickshire
- Atherstone Bridge Club
- North Warwickshire Arts
- Atherstone Rotary Club
- Northern Warwickshire Tourism
- Girl Guiding Atherstone District

In addition to those directly contacted by the Town Clerk the following also responded to the Public Consultation

- Happy Stitching
- Mr. D. Pickard
- Values Education for Life
- Guideposts Carer Support

In total 12 completed response forms were received. However, the consultation period was less than the 12 week period recommended in the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100807/file47158.pdf

Copies of all the responses were emailed to Town Councillors by the Town Clerk on November 23rd, 2016

The consultation document consisted of 4 questions.

1. Are you interested in this opportunity? Yes/no
2. Would you require permanent or occasional usage? Yes/no both
3. Contact for your organisation
4. What facilities would you like to be made available in the upstairs area of the Arcade?

Responses to the questions were as follows

1. Yes 11/12 No 1/12 (This response was from North Warwickshire Arts which at the time had not been active for several years)
2. Responses received 11. Yes 4, No 0, Both 2, Permanent 2, Occasional 3
Some responses were specific about time slot required e.g. Wednesday, 4.30 – 6.00pm, term time, Wednesday evening 7pm- 10.30pm and Tuesday evening 4

times a year, Thursday morning once a month. Other responses indicated a range of requirement, but with no specific day/time identified e.g. ongoing, weekly, morning, afternoon and evening, flexible, permanent/occasional dependent on cost, other ad hoc use, if possible 7 days a week, 9.00 to 5.00

3. Contact details were provided by all respondents
4. This question was open so invited a broad range of responses. Respondents identified the need for the following:
 - a heated, multi-functional space suitable for public meetings/functions/training/activities/ municipal hospitality, equipped with folding tables and stackable chairs, with toilet facilities and kitchen/drinks preparation area, tea/coffee making facilities. Also required is a smaller room for small group meetings/interviews.
 - Office space (Volunteer Centre- Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm, suitable for minimum of 6 people. Values Education for Life is a registered charity and requires office space Monday-Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm. Occasional use for Guideposts Carer Support Service)
 - Reception area
 - Refreshment area/tea room (Volunteer Centre)
 - Area for display/ noticeboards (Girl Guides, Northern Warwickshire Tourism)
 - Accessibility for disabled users e.g. platform lift (Girl Guides)
 - Preparation area and storage space close to the Visitors Centre for exhibition and tourist information materials. (Friends of Atherstone Heritage)
 - Space to store small equipment (Girl Guides)
 - IT facilities, data projector and screen, computer, internet access (Rotary Club, Mr. D. Pickard, Guideposts Carer Support Services, CAB)
 - Reprographic equipment available with associated storage

It was noted that The Friends of Atherstone Heritage included a lengthy description of their work in protecting and maintaining local history archives, together with a summary of the difficulties they face. Eileen Barrs, Chair and Lorna Dirveiks, Secretary request that the Council include this on a future agenda for discussion about its support for the efforts of The Friends of Atherstone Heritage.

Appendix to Report on Public Consultation

Update April 2017

Due to the amount of time that has elapsed since the public consultation was carried out (Jan 2016), where possible the respondents have been contacted to update their responses in terms of their requirements in making use of the upstairs community space at the Arcade.

The following respondents indicated a continued interest in making use of the facility

- Volunteer Centre
- Friends of Atherstone Heritage
- North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureau
- Atherstone Rotary Club
- Atherstone Bridge Club
- Derek Pickard
- Girl Guides (as venue for Rainbows)
- Guideposts Carer Support Service

At time of writing it has not yet been possible to contact the following

- Happy Stitching
- Northern Warwickshire Tourism

‘Values for Education’ have secured alternative premises in the town and no longer require the use of the facility.

Additional interest expressed by the following

- Adders Hockey Club
- University of the Third Age
- North Warwickshire Arts

There is considerable planned residential development in and around Atherstone that will substantially increase the population and the demand for community facilities in the town.