

Shaping Stalbridge: the next step

EXTENDING the Trailway and saving the library came up as big issues for Stalbridge residents during a recent feedback meeting from the Shaping Stalbridge consultation day in March. Affordable housing, public transport and facilities for young people were also areas of concern.

The Shaping Stalbridge working group, made up of town councillors and independent volunteers, has now sifted through all of the comments made during the consultation day and is preparing a rolling list of tasks.

These have been sorted into jobs that can be achieved by the town council, others that can happen with the help of volunteers, or issues that need to be addressed by other organisations.

The working group has already been busy passing on comments to local committees, traders and schools to see if they can help with various requests (for example, transport for those attending after school clubs at Sturminster High School, or asking the county or district council to clarify the position on broadband provision or recycling), and has also grouped ideas and suggestions into short medium and long term actions.

The day in March was organised by the town council in order to discover people's priorities for the future of Stalbridge, and as a way of reviewing and refreshing the 2008 Town Plan. Many of the actions in the original Town Plan have already been carried out.

Town council chairman Graham Carr-Jones said: "We can't rely on the town council to be able to make all of these ideas happen – we are delighted that so many people came to give their input, and we are very grateful to those that came forward to volunteer on the day, but now we need to match people's expertise to the jobs that need doing.

"For example, Stalbridge desperately needs a community website. Maybe there is someone else who could help set up a garden share scheme. Other people could put in some time on a single issue, such as co-ordinating a campaign for better broadband, or lobbying for more frequent buses. We also need volunteer representatives from the other villages in our ward to liaise and feed back information."

One of the ideas that attracted the most support on the day was the proposal to extend the library building next to the car park in Station road, in order to create a community hub, encompassing the library and council offices. This would secure the future of Stalbridge library. A working group for this project has already been formed and they will soon be putting out an update to all residents in Stalbridge.

Other issues that will be considered shortly include: improving community information (for example, on jobs, public transport and services); investigating the possibility of more allotments; the re-establishment of a town litter picking group; providing some facilities for older children; and looking at ways of assisting the Trailway group to move the project forward.

There was also positive support for setting up a community partnership for Stalbridge and the surrounding area, which could co-ordinate and facilitate many of the suggested improvements – some of which have already been carried out, such as new road markings and bollards in Ring Street near Dike's and the installation of additional dog waste bins.

The Shaping Stalbridge working group will be contacting people who volunteered on the day to see how they might be able to help in certain areas. Anyone else wanting to offer their skills or services should contact the town clerk Tracey Watson (email: clerk@stalbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk, or drop a note into the community office) who will pass on contact details to the Shaping Stalbridge working group.

SHAPING STALBRIDGE: KEY POINTS

Suggestions:

More affordable housing

Save Stalbridge library

Broadband needs to be improved

New locations for grit bins

Setting up a community partnership

More allotments needed

Regular list of jobs be advertised in the community office

Stalbridge website needed

Better public transport

Hall: more activities needed eg film club, classes

Improve facilities for older children **eg skate park**, café

Extend the Trailway

Turn off streetlights from midnight till dawn

Start cardboard recycling collections

Introduce farmer's market or local produce market

Open Stalbridge School pool for the public, weekends/holidays

Loyalty card scheme for Stalbridge shops

Look at Duck Lane parking and access problem

Pedestrian crossing

Problem of HGVs

More cycle routes

Litter and dog fouling an issue

Renewable energy ideas for the town

Positive comments:

Great range of local shops

Good doctors' surgery and dentist

Car parking initiative excellent, well done to the traders

Praise for primary school and pre-school

Support for Community Hub idea