

	FULL COUNCIL
Date	11 March 2024
Agenda Item	13

To consider an aspect of the Town Centre regeneration project

The BDC project to do works to the town centres of both Halstead and Witham has stalled because ECC have refused to consider the licence as submitted by BDC. Members were involved in a meeting in early February and the upshot was that ECC will only consider BDC's licence if all existing street furniture on the high street is regularised and granted a licence so that it is known who has responsibility for it, and its long term maintenance and upkeep. Historically licences do not appear to have been submitted (or ECC has no record of them), although some recent additions, such as planters in Halstead High Street have had a licence sorted and agreed.

BDC contacted Witham and Halstead Clerks to ask if either of the Councils has records of assets which we believe are ours and are placed on the High Street and/or are willing to enter discussions into taking responsibility for current assets on the High Street. BDC's records are also limited but they are asking the same question of their own members. If ECC do not receive licences for everything then the current regeneration projects will not be able to go ahead and ECC would look to remove all existing unlicensed street furniture from the High Streets.

An in-person meeting was held on 5 March at BDC between BDC officers, Grace Allman, Julia Watts and Emma Goodings, the clerks from Witham and Halstead and the ECC officer who manages licences.

Fortunately, it was possible to resolve the situation through the face-to-face meeting, and Halstead has come out of the meeting with very few problems. The street furniture in question consists of bins, bollards, benches, noticeboards and planters. The 2 noticeboards belong to HTC and will be removed when the new Wayfinder monoliths are installed.

All the planters are licensed to Halstead Town Council for use by HiB, except, apparently the large planters installed in Parsonage Street a few years ago to stop parking on the verges. This is being checked out and the Clerk will apply for the licence if it is needed. The licence also has to be updated if planters are removed and apparently this is the case outside the Public Gardens.

BDC has taken responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of all bins and benches in the High Street, and is very likely to manage the bollards as well. As a result it will now be possible for the Town Centre regeneration project to move forward. The contractors are ready to start work, and it should be possible for the work to go ahead from the summer.

Recommendation: that HTC notes the situation on the town centre regeneration

Sarah Greateorex

Sarah Greateorex **Town Clerk**