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Meeting: Recreation, Amenities and Environment Committee Item RAE3.12

Date: 10th August 2021

Author: Marketing, Communications and Community Engagement Officer

Subject: Telephone Kiosk Report

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to explore potential options for the Improvement of the Town Council's Telephone Kiosk on Charlton Road near the junction with Allyn Saxon Drive.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Shepton Mallet Town Council acquired this Telephone Box a few years ago with two others. This is the remaining kiosk under control of the Town Council after two were disposed of and another is in negotiations to be leased to a local group.
- 2.2 There are a number of options for the use/conversion of Telephone Kiosks which have been implemented by local authorities and community groups up and down the country. They range greatly in terms of the necessity for local community involvement, complexity and cost. Thought must also be given to the practicality of any potential options in the kiosk's location and wider context of Shepton Mallet. Below are several options presented in no particular order.
- 2.3 **Option 1: Turn it into a Planter / Pollinator Stop.** As a Councillor in Peasedown St. John I am currently leading on a project to implement improvements to our two parish Telephone Kiosks. One of these kiosks is being turned into a vertical planter similar to those seen in Southgate shopping centre, Bath (below). This involves stripping down the kiosk completely, repainting it, installing shelves, installing trough planters and installing a solar-powered watering system. This requires little community involvement or commitment and is not overly complex to implement. There is a risk of vandalism to the flowers themselves but not necessarily the kiosk as it can be locked shut while planted / opened for planting. Peasedown Parish Council earmarked £2,000 for this project. The project is not yet complete but is due to be completed in the coming months.

Consideration could be given to whether Dobbies would wish to contribute plants on an ongoing-basis in return for some advertising in one of the window panes.



Option 1

2.4 **Option 2: Community Book Swap.** Several communities around the country have used the kiosks as community managed Libraries / Book Swaps. Chilcompton and Coxley are two parishes where I know this has been implemented locally. This option is not complex but does require community involvement and commitment to manage it; it tends to work better in smaller communities without local library provision. There is a heightened risk of vandalism and/or fire, especially to the contents. Consideration may also wish to be given to the Town Council's significant financial contribution to the newly re-opened Library and whether this could create some kind of conflict either of interests or between organisations.



Option 2

2.5 **Option 3: Defibrillator.** Radstock Town Council have recently acquired a restored Red Telephone Box for the purpose of housing a defibrillator in the town centre. This option does not require community management but there is a risk of vandalism. However, most public access defibrillators are built and designed to withstand opportunistic vandalism. Consideration must be given to defibrillator provision in Shepton Mallet and in the immediate vicinity of the kiosk. So too must the supply of electricity to the kiosk and whether this is still available. Some communities leave the kiosk red and others repaint the kiosks yellow.



Option 3

2.6: **Option 4: Heritage / Local Information Board.** Near Wellington in Somerset there is a place called Ford Street, and they have used their kiosk to hold some signage about their local area. For Shepton Mallet this could potentially link in with the Heritage Trail or Wayfinding Projects. In the Ford Street example they have used the blank back of the kiosk which in our case faces a wall, but signage could be made to the size of the overall window openings and affixed over the windows. This option requires no community management and is only as susceptible to vandalism as any other signage.



Option 4

2.7 **Option 5: 'Welcome to Shepton Mallet' Signage.** Very similar to the above but instead could be Town Council branded and act as a welcome to visitors who travel along that road.

2.8 **Option 6: Art Installation.** This option has been explored in the past but there are ways to simplify the process of using the kiosk as an art installation. One such option would be to install Perspex panels behind all of the window openings on each side with one large piece of art on each side. This removes the need for many smaller panels of art to fit into the window slots. This option can be strengthened by the method of installation and the thickness of Perspex used. Additionally, if the art was on the inside of the kiosk panels, this reduces the risk of vandalism to the art. The kiosk overall is obviously still vulnerable. Other communities around the country have installed stained glass panels to the window openings but this is very susceptible to vandalism and best appreciated from inside the kiosk rather than outside. This option requires community involvement/engagement to create the art but no ongoing community management.



Option 6

2.9 **Option 7: Just Replace the TELEPHONE signs.**

This is a very light-touch and therefore cost effective option which is relatively resistant to vandalism and does not rely on the community. The rest of the kiosk is in relatively good shape albeit, it could benefit from a repaint to make it brighter. The Town Council could consider a number of options from reinstalling traditional TELEPHONE signs, installing SHEPTON MALLET signs in the traditional font or installing Town Council branded signs.



Option 7

2.10 **Option 8: Move it.** This option could be taken in conjunction with some of the above options to improve the usage and visibility of the kiosk. However, the kiosk will weigh around 750kg and it is a job for specialist contractors to remove and re-site the kiosk. This also depends on finding a suitable new location and securing all of the necessary permissions.

An option that may be worth exploring would be to work with Kilver Court to have it placed on their grounds and use a couple of sides of the kiosk to encourage people to visit the Town Centre and other attractions. The kiosk would fit the aesthetic of Kilver Court and many people are drawn there but do not then visit the town or indeed drive through it.

2.11 **Option 9: Sell it.** The legalities of this would need to be considered as well as the loss of an historic and iconic asset. However, kiosks in good shape on eBay regularly fetch £3,000 to £5,000 from people who wish to own them privately.

3.0 Financial Information

3.1 The costs of the above options will vary greatly depending on what is decided. The costs could range from a hundred pounds to replace the signs to several thousand if the box were to be moved, renovated and turned into a planter for example.

4.0 Environmental Implications

4.1 The only environmental impact may arise from the moving of the kiosk as this would involve specialist contractors and it is 750kg. All other options have no or negligible environmental impact. Option 1, the planter/pollinator stop would have a beneficial impact on biodiversity and reduction in greenhouse gasses.

5.0 Town Plan Reference

5.1 Protected Environment

Protect and improve Trees, Woodland, Wild Flower Areas and Habitats	Work with partners and landlords to consider opportunities for planting more trees, woodlands, wild flower meadows, hedgerows and to protect open spaces that might be neglected Aspire to owning or managing a community woodland or countryside park
Protect and enhance Biodiversity and Ecology	Identify the vast wealth of biodiversity in the area and work with others to ensure that it is protected

5.2 Promotion

Advance Culture, the Arts, and Education	Capitalise on the rich culture and heritage that the town has to offer and advance it through self-promotion to locals and visitors alike
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Engage with and support businesses and commerce	Work with the wide range of local, national and international businesses that are based in Shepton, to offer each other opportunities for development and growth
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6.0 **Recommendations**

- 6.1 That the committee decide upon the option(s) they wish to investigate further for the kiosk on Charlton Road and delegate to the Marketing, Communications and Community Engagement Officer to prepare detailed costs and implementation plans are brought to a future meeting for approval.