



WELLINGTON CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE

**Executive Committee Meeting
Wednesday 27th October 2010 at 6pm
The Town Council Rooms, 28 Fore Street, Wellington**

Minutes

Present: John Pragnell, Sue White, Terry Sanford, Dennis King, Cathy Wiggan, Andy Hunt, Alison Stock, Steve Mahoney, Julia Thorne, Sarah Stuart, Michael Coate, Dave Mitton, Helen Thorne, Des Hawkins, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ian Stock, Beryl Griffiths, Jill Parr, Sam Parr, Jackie Govier

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Janet Reed, Louise Tredwin and Andrew Govier.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Dave Mitton pointed out a discrepancy in the minutes of the last meeting, on page 3 under the sub-title of 'Wellington Town Council'. The statement reports that the post of Police Liaison Officer has returned – however it should actually read retired.

Emma Blake agreed to amend this, and the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 22nd September 2010 were agreed and signed off by Sue White.

3. Matters Arising

Review of Food Town

John Pragnell reported that there would be a Christmas Food Festival held on Saturday 11th December 2010, in the High Street – the same format as the highly successful festival held in September. There has already been a lot of interest, although the Committee are not sure how many of these will actually book stalls – however 8 stalls are already booked and paid for.

The Committee has decided to keep the Festival in the High Street so it remains central to the town. It will run from 10am until 3pm.

Some marquees will be hired from the Farmer's Market and also from Friends of Wellington Park. However Dave Mitton commented on the fact that more volunteers would be needed to help with marquee/gazebo erection etc on the morning of the Festival.

A press release will be issued soon which will indicate how to go about applying for a stall and the costs involved. Traders need to contact Donna Munson from Rule 7, and the cost is £40 per stall.

It is hoped that there will be musical entertainment on the day, possibly a choir around the Christmas tree. Jackie Govier said that she would use her contacts with the local primary schools to see if she could get any of the school children involved in singing carols. It was agreed this would be good as it helps to draw more people to the event ie parents and families of the children.

4. Welcome to New Management Committee for 2010 – 2011

The Chamber welcomed the New Management Committee for this coming year, as voted for in the evening's earlier Annual General Meeting. This involves Terry Sanford as President, Des Hawkins as Vice President, Sue White as Chairman, Helen Thorne as Treasurer, Cathy Wiggan and Sue White as joint Social Secretary, John Pragnell as Economic and Planning Representative, Sue White and Terry Sanford as Somerset Chamber of Trade and Commerce Representatives and Dennis King, Terry Sanford, John Pragnell, Fred Domellof and Helen Thorne as Wellington Economic Partnership Representatives.

5. Finance

See Treasurer's Report attached to Annual General Meeting Minutes.

6. Farmers Market Report

Michael Coate reported that there are now only four more markets to go until Christmas. The last one before Christmas will be the big Christmas Farmer's Market which is to be held on Saturday 18th December between 9am and 2pm in the Scout Hall. Along with the usual stalls there is also going to be mince

pies and 'Christmas brew' available along with face painting, carol singers and live entertainment in the form of local band 'The Iron Dukes'.

There has been so much interest in various traders wanting to get involved that there is not enough room in the Scout Hall to accommodate everyone.

Viviene Stock-Williams enquired whether it could be fragmented around the town. For instance having the regular producers for the Farmer's Market in the Scout Hall and then having extra craft stalls etc in Lancer Court.

Michael Coate said that he had suggested this to the Market but they are unhappy about splitting the Market up.

John Pragnell informed him that the Food Festival would be happy to accommodate the extra stalls, and they could contact Donna Munson regarding this.

Michael Coate told the Chamber that there will be no market on the 1st January next year, instead the first Farmer's Market of 2011 will be held on Saturday 15th January.

7. Wellington Town Council Report

Viviene Stock-Williams reported to the Chamber that most of the previous Council meeting had been taken up with the Mantle Street car parking problem due to the new Medical Centre.

Janet Govier said that Andrew Govier had recently meet with officers at Somerset County Council and the whole issue was now being looked at again.

Sue White asked about this year's Christmas Lights Switch-on. Julia Thorne informed the Chamber that it will be held on Saturday 27th November starting at 3.45pm, with the actual switch-on at 6.30pm by children from Wellington Junior School.

At 5pm there is going to be a children's procession though the town, which will include Mary and Joseph and a donkey! There will also be Santa's Grotto at the Wellington Weekly office, carols around the tree, Wellington majorettes, roundabout rides and the launch of the Christmas window competitions. Waitrose is supporting the event – which last year involved food tasting and giving out of money-off vouchers. The whole event will once again be compered by Kevin Stratton.

Julia Thorne wanted to stress the fact that the Christmas Lights Switch-on had been moved to a Saturday as the Chamber had felt this would be more beneficial for both the event itself and the town's traders – however this means there should be a lot more support for the event from the traders.

If any traders are opening late for the event, or have anything special going on they should contact either Julia Thorne or Greg Dyke at the Wellington Council Office and they will help them with publicising this.

Helen Thorne asked if there would be anymore lights this year. Julia Thorne answered that there would be a few more, including some to go across the road. However next year will be the last year of the three-year phasing in of new lights.

8. Pre Christmas Social Event

It had been decided in the earlier Annual General Meeting that this would now be open to all traders in addition to those the Chamber wanted to thank for their parts in the Wellington Boot Throwing Competition and the Festival Fortnight.

Sue White questioned whether the Chamber wanted a meeting in November, as everyone would meet up at the beginning of December at this event. It was decided that the next meeting on Wednesday 24th November would still go ahead, as a pre-social event meeting, and that there would be no meeting in December as usual.

9. Presentations and Guests

Sue White said that this would be looked at between now and the New Year and hopefully this would start up around February time.

10. Any Other Business

Summary of Wellington Economic Survey (See Appendix 1)

Ian Stock reported some of the findings of the Wellington Economic Survey. The majority of traders felt that there was a definite positive effect on the town during the Festival Fortnight, however almost half of these did not feel that this had any positive effect on their business during this time. Some of these who felt it did not affect their business were on the trading estate out of town, however some were not far from the town centre at all.

In relation to the longer term effect it seems that most are positive, providing it is all continued year after year.

The survey brought up many questions and suggestions from traders (which can be found on the back page of Appendix 1). The Chamber picked up on one in particular, which was the “Duke of Wellington” relationship.

Jackie Govier commented that they had recently been on a trip to Portugal to celebrate the twinning of Wellington with Vedras, and while they were there had been taken to a medieval market. She felt that this could easily be reconstructed here and is certainly something to think about.

Ian Stock finished up by saying that with regards to the economics of the town there is still a positive feel amongst traders, although there is mention of the dampening down of spending.

Superfast Broadband

Vivienne Stock-Williams reported on a meeting she and Terry Sanford had had earlier in the day with officers from Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council.

It has just been announced that superfast fibre optic broadband coming to Taunton in 2011. This means BT will be providing broadband speeds of 40-60Mb. Wellington is in Phase 3 of the roll-out programme, which means it should arrive locally in 2015.

The purpose of the meeting was to find out whether it might be possible for Wellington Chamber, in partnership with the 3 local Councils, to build a strong business case for next generation broadband to be installed in the area sooner – if such an idea met with approval from the local business and community sectors.

There are two options which might be available: firstly, to go it alone as quickly as possible or secondly, to work proactively with the councils in developing a countywide business case. If the Chamber decides to work with the councils on this it could be possible for the Wellington area to become a flagship for the project, as we had shown early interest.

Terry Sanford and Vivienne Stock-Williams recommended that the first option was too resource-intensive. Given the enthusiasm expressed by the Chamber it was decided to push for flagship status. The introduction of superfast broadband would not only enhance the opportunities and performance of existing local businesses, but would undoubtedly attract inward investment from larger companies.

In the meantime, it was suggested that members voted on The Race to Infinity website, www.racetoinfinity.bt.com. This BT competition could both give added weight to the business case and an opportunity to fast track the area.

South Street

Terry Sanford informed the Chamber that he had recently had a meeting with Clare de'Ruyter of The Cheese and Wine Shop and Sally of MadDog. The South Street traders have organised a Christmas fair to be held on Saturday 13th November in Wellington Baptist Church hall. There will be numerous stalls from the traders in South Street and a raffle to win a £200 hamper.

Sam Parr told the Chamber that she felt that the whole 'South Street Specialist Shop' idea was causing bad feeling amongst some of the other traders. They feel that the whole idea of the Festival Fortnight and Wellington Experience was to bring the whole town together, and they feel that this is just dividing the town and implying that only the shops in South Street are specialist shops – whereas it is in fact the town as a whole that is a specialist town as most of the shops are specialist. Some of the traders outside of South Street wanted to get involved in the Christmas fair but were told that they were not able to.

Terry Sanford replied that the Chamber wants the town to work together, but also merit's the South Street traders for trying to do something themselves and that there is nothing stopping the other streets doing something similar.

Sue White said that this is what the Chamber is all about. If traders have these kind of issues they should bring it to the Chamber meetings so there can be a proper discussion about the situation.

Town Map

Terry Sanford informed the Chamber that he had spoken with Waitrose regarding the proposed town maps. They have agreed to have something in the car park – which is hoped to be a large map of the town. They have also agreed to distribute the paper folded maps of the town.

Jackie Govier added that Andrew Govier had an update regarding this, and that Taunton Deane Borough Council have some funding available for this. Terry Sanford is to liaise with Andrew Govier to find out the details.

Empty shops

Helen Thorne reported that she has heard news of the future of some of the town's empty shops. Little Paprika, in South Street, is set to become a photographic studio and Wellington Sports, also in South Street has been purchased but it is unclear what is going to happen there. The old pet shop in High Street will become a natural health clinic.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm