

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 30TH JUNE 2015**

PRESENT: Cllr. Holmes (in the Chair), Cllrs. Clifford, Fairweather, Franks, Hartley, Kemp and Rook

Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying: `

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

01/15: Nomination of Vice Chairman:

Cllr. Holmes proposed Cllr. Clifford as Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr. Rook and agreed. Cllr. Clifford was happy to accept.

02/15: Consideration of Councillors suggestions and agreement of action plan:

The Chairman stated that as this Committee had been resurrected he would welcome ideas and suggestions for an action plan and he thought that the suggestions made by Cllr. Clifford in his circulated e mail were entirely relevant. He felt that the Committee should focus on a batting order and decided what the immediate key and first actions should be and act accordingly and to that end he had suggested the following:

- The creation of a batting order of action
- The formation of a new business development group
- Collate a diary of known future events to develop tourist visits
- Collate list of voluntary organisation for future relationships
- Review the allocated budget and assign known expenditure

Cllr. Clifford explained his reasons for the headings and stated he was disappointed to hear that the Cranbrook Business Association did not appear to hold regular meetings. He had spoken to three businesses in the town and they would be happy to give their feedback on their perceptions on how to move forward and make the Town more vibrant.

Cllr. Rook explained the history of the CBA and stated that he felt they no longer had any real purpose or direction. They concentrated mainly on the coach outings and Cranbrook in Bloom. Both were very successful and monies raised from the coach outings were ring-fenced for a community centre. However, there was not a real focus on business and he gave an example of another organisation's business breakfast which he attended. So much more could be achieved by the CBA with a whole range of initiatives which he outlined. Cllr. Kemp agreed stating that home deliveries are now the norm and could be considered.

Cllr. Holmes suggested that as a matter of courtesy we should speak to the Chairman of the CBA and he volunteered to speak to Graham Edwards. Cllr. Clifford agreed stating that we have a Committee which is here to help and by listening to the businesses in the Town we can glean information. One issue already raised is the lack of parking.

Cllr. Hartley enquired whether we were in a business improvement area – these exist in London. Cranbrook could make a bid to become a business improvement centre.

Cllr. Clifford suggested that marketing and PR was vital to promote the Town and he tabled the Tunbridge Wells magazine “Local”. There was no mention of Cranbrook or Sissinghurst in the edition. It was all focused on Tunbridge Wells. Cllr. Holmes informed Members that it appeared that the Tunbridge Wells Members did not support the magazine which came at a cost to ratepayers. Cllr. Clifford made the comment that the magazine had been under threat many times and had been rebranded but it had survived.

Cllr. Fairweather stated that it was up to the business community to promote themselves economically – we are here to assist. He suggested we send an invitation to all businesses to try to bring about a fresh start – we should try to work together. After discussion it was felt that a large meeting was not the way forward.

Cllr. Hartley agreed with the comments but felt that with all good intentions we will not be able to even scratch the surface and if we made the bid to become a business improvement centre that this would all be dealt with for us. After a full discussion Cllr. Hartley agreed to assess the website and e mail the information round to Members.

Cllr. Kemp agreed with the idea of talking to businesses, he had spoken with a prospective investor – you get live knowledge. He mentioned the supermarket which had a double presence in Cranbrook which is not ideal. Following a full discussion it was agreed by Members that it was a good idea to each talk to three businesses and then report back to the next meeting.

Cllr. Kemp felt there was a wider issue of really promoting and developing the town centre with pedestrian re-sculpting, urban spillage etc – you need architectural and businesses to go together. He would like to see future development of a farmers market to be held in the open.

Other issues were then discussed such as collection of data i.e. how many businesses exist, and perhaps meeting with TWBC Economic Officers and Portfolio Holders.

The Chairman informed Members that there had been a change of name following the recent resurrected Tourism group – it is now called the Cranbrook Tourism Group and they needed the support of this Committee in a close working relationship and with some funding.

Cllr. Fairweather drew Members attention back to the batting order and suggested it should be:

- To promote the current businesses and the economy of the Town
- To look at the BID (Business Improvement District) as outlined by Cllr. Hartley
- To create a focus group
- How we approach the business community in Cranbrook and where it progresses
- Promote tourism.

He suggested that there should not be an overlap with regard to the Tourism Group.

Cllr. Hartley stated how important it was that if we undertake a neighbourhood plan that we make sure it is as business friendly as we can – a neighbourhood plan is where we have real power. The Clerk reminded Members that the Borough Core Strategy did not contain any business space allocation in our parish despite being asked on several occasions.

A discussion took place on an events diary. The Clerk stated that we do put events of the website, Be in the Know and on the noticeboards. It was accepted that this is reliant on people providing the information. Various ideas were put forward on communication including Facebook, twitter, tweets and e mails.

Cllr. Franks brought forward an idea of market research being carried out by sixth formers of our two schools which could be called the Cranbrook Barometer. All Members thought that this was an excellent idea. Cllr. Rook volunteered to contact the two head teachers.

With regard to the amount of budget available to the Economic & Community Development Committee, Cllr. Holmes stated that there was about £5,000 available – we had recently spent money on the Walk in Time Walks pack.

03/15: Welcome Packs and Leaflets:

Cllr. Holmes tabled a leaflet “Visit Cranbrook Heritage & Shopping 2011/2012 which was out of date. These were very popular and stocks were running low. Cllr. Rook had updated the leaflet to concentrate on the heritage trail only. It was proposed by Cllr. Holmes, seconded by Cllr. Fairweather and agreed to go ahead with a print run of 100 leaflets, subject to proof reading.

The Chairman tabled the Welcome card which had previously been distributed to estate agents and housing associations to welcome new people to the Parish. Members thought that the original card was in need of review and that a new version should be designed. Cllr. Clifford offered to undertake a re-write and Cllr. Fairweather offered to take some more pictures which he would e mail to Cllr. Clifford. It was agreed to defer this to the next meeting.

04/15: Items for Information:

a) Responding to a question from Cllr. Rook, the Clerk confirmed that we had received no further information of when the next phase of the gas works would commence.

b) The Clerk gave an update on the Crown Inn – legal action continues with the lessees. Enterprise Inns current plan is then to invest in the site but the current legal stalemate is delaying things. With regard to the former Windmill Inn, this is owned by a development company but travellers have set up home in the grounds. She had provided contact details of two of the directors of the development company to the TWBC Enforcement Team.