

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER 2015**

PRESENT: Cllr. Holmes (in the Chair), Cllrs. Hartley, Rook and Veitch.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Clifford, Fairweather, Franks and Kemp.

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.

Cllr. Rook declared an interest in item 06/15 – He had been working on the redesign of the Heritage Trail leaflets and it was likely his company would be printing them.

05/15: Welcome Packs:

Unfortunately both Cllr. Clifford and Cllr. Fairweather were unable to attend this evenings meeting, however Cllr. Fairweather had updated the Deputy Clerk on progress. The photographs had been taken and were with Cllr. Clifford to add appropriate wording for the cards. Cllr. Fairweather was concerned that the photo of Stone Street, with the Windmill in the background may need to be retaken as there was evidence of some unsightly scaffolding. Cllr. Rook was confident the image could be photo shopped to erase that element.

Cllr Holmes tabled the existing version and in response to Cllr. Veitch's query it was confirmed that the 'scan qr' code on the reverse of the card still worked. Cllr. Holmes proposed that subject to unanimous approval by the Committee of a 'proof' card, a sum of up to £200 be put aside for printing costs, this was seconded by Cllr. Hartley and agreed.

The Committee felt there should be further investigation into how the cards are distributed, once they have been printed.

06/15: Heritage Trail Leaflets:

Cllr. Rook tabled a rough proof of the redesign of the leaflets. Cllr. Holmes explained that originally they had been produced to promote the shopping and heritage of the Town, however the shopping element rapidly became out of date. Cllr. Rook explained that as he was working from a PDF file, his ability to edit the leaflet was limited. There were several suggestions on re-wording the 'Getting here & around' section which Cllr. Rook noted. Distribution of the leaflet was also discussed with the suggestion that they could be supplied to local B& B's for their guests. Cllr. Holmes felt that if a reference to Sissinghurst Castle Gardens was included then he would be happy to approach Hester Liakos in an attempt to persuade them to hold a stock of the leaflets in The Old Dairy.

As we would be producing and paying for the leaflets it was decided that the Parish Council's address and contact details be added alongside our logo. Cllr. Rook stated he would continue work on the leaflet taking on board all the suggestions. He confirmed to Cllr. Veitch that he could create an internet friendly version for inclusion on our website. It was agreed that it also be forwarded to TWBC to replace the existing version on their website.

07/15: Market Research/Cranbrook Barometer:

Cllr. Rook Informed Members that he had spoken to both John Weeds and Carrie Beech, both were happy to be involved with the project. With their agreement in place it was hoped that Cllr. Franks would now be able to produce a draft questionnaire.

08/15: Business Improvement Districts:

Cllr. Hartley stated that he had formed the impression that this may be too big an initiative for Cranbrook. He had mentioned it to random people and businesses, receiving responses such as “How much will it cost” and “What will I get from it”. He felt that if the businesses themselves had failed to identify it as a possibility then maybe it was not suitable for a small town. In the areas he had seen it succeed the districts were much bigger. Cllr. Holmes stated that in the information he had read, it mentioned a levy that would be imposed, he felt this would be an issue as the Business Association had encountered difficulties in obtaining their relatively low subscription fees. Cllr. Holmes wondered if it would be more likely to succeed if the idea were taken on by TWBC in a wider context that encompasses the entire Borough area; he struggled to see how it would work on such a local level. Cllr. Hartley stated that local authorities in London did not agree with BID’s as they see them as competition for the control and command over public spaces. Cllr. Hartley explained that a ‘BID’ is characterised by focusing on a leisure or location, reinforcing the brand of that location.

Cllr. Holmes informed Members that Cllr. Veitch had organised a meeting in early October between the Chairman of the CBA and several interested parties to see if the organisation can be revitalised. Members agreed the first step was to encourage the revitalisation of the Business Association; if it were to flourish, it may consider ‘bid status’ itself. Cllr Hartley felt if any levies were discounted against the business rates then it might have more chance of being successful. Cllr. Holmes thanked Cllr. Hartley for the research he had conducted.

09/15 Feedback from Local Businesses:

Cllr. Holmes reminded Members that they had each agreed to speak to three local businesses to find out what they felt would make the Town more prosperous and vibrant. He referred to emails from Cllrs. Franks and Fairweather. He had spoken to Cllr. Franks, who admitted that he had misunderstood what information he was supposed to obtain from the businesses so had agreed to revisit them. Cllr. Holmes read out Cllr. Fairweather’s email in which he listed the points raised by the businesses he had approached which included empty shops, markets, car parking and references to the proposed Community Centre. Cllr. Rook raised the issue of Wednesday closing and how he felt it affected footfall in the Town. He also mentioned the lack of knowledge in internet and social media marketing. It was suggested that Cranbrook Business Association may be able to facilitate training events for this.

Cllr. Hartley had spoken to a volunteer from the Windmill who said they had difficulty in finding outlets for the flour they produce. Cllr. Veitch advised him that it was not just finding an outlet, it was also producing sufficient supplies to make it commercially viable.

Some of the retailers spoken to remained unperturbed at the possibility of enticing high street names to the Town if it helped to increase footfall.

Cllr Holmes offered to collect the responses from the councillors unable to attend together with the information obtained this evening on one document using a format of bullet points. This was gratefully accepted by the Committee.

10/15: Items for Information:

Cllr. Holmes informed Members that he had written a piece in this month's newsletter encouraging organisations to let us know about forthcoming events so that they could be included on our diary page on the website. The Deputy Clerk reported that she had added at least half a dozen events today alone.