

WELSHPOOL BUSINESS FORUM MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall on
Monday 17th February 2014 at 7pm

PRESENT WERE:

Cllr S Kaye (Chair), Cllr A Bowen, Cllr B McWhinnie, Cllr D Simms, Alan Crowe, Val Edwards, Freda Davies, Simon Ebrey Heather Parkes, Melvin Parkes, Jan Williams, Alan Williams, Jean Pearson, Christine Holmes, A J Flintham, Cllr Dr J Morgan, Dfydd Evans and Cllr Rosemarie Harris (PCC Portfolio Holder) and Robert Robinson (Secretary).

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Cllr R Harris from Powys County Council and Dafydd Evans of Antur Teifi.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr E Bleivas, Cllr H Evans, Ryhanne Humphreys, and Kay Derwas.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a correct record.

3. Powys County Council Discussion following the minute below from the meeting held on 20th January 2014:

On Monday 20th January 2014 the Businesses of Welshpool attended the Monthly Business Forum hosted by Welshpool Projects.

The businesses discussed the budget cuts proposed by Powys County Council and many had attended the Consultation last Thursday in Welshpool Town Hall.

After much debate a motion of 'no confidence in the management of Powys County Council' was put and voted upon and unanimously passed. A spokesman for the Forum said 'The Welshpool Businesses felt they wanted to give a clear message to Powys County Council that they are very unhappy with the way Powys County Council conducts its business.'

A letter confirming the vote is to be sent to both the Leader of the Council (Cllr Barry Thomas) and the Chief Executive (Jeremy Patterson).

The following matters were raised (not in any particular order):

- 1) The meeting explained its basic concern which lead to the above:
 - a) The consultation held on 16th January in the Town Hall had officers stating that no decisions will be made until later in February. However within a few days the new phone system was in place. This gave the impression that all was going to happen anyway.
 - b) The items on the survey list such as saving on transport should have been done as a matter of course, this proved bad management.
- 2) The Chair asked for clarity in what PCC is proposing with regard to cuts.
- 3) Cllr R Harris was sorry about the short notice of the consultation on cuts, and for the political situation which aided the delays.
- 4) Cllr R Harris answered questions relating to:
 - Schools and the closure of small schools.
 - Telephone system.
 - Monthly report to cabinet on monitoring effects of cuts.
 - The need for political change.
 - Geographical problems of Powys.
 - Review of the cost of management (layering).
 - Small business playing an important role.
 - Consultancy cost reductions.
 - Business rates and what business gets for it.
 - Potters Yard and re-cycling .
 - 400 jobs going from PCC and this will affect the local economy.
- 5) Other points raised by the group as comment were:
 - Size of electoral wards in Powys is very uneven with very small numbers in some cases.
 - Problems of not knowing what an independent Councillor is standing for when elections take place.
 - Local red tape often causes problems.
 - Offer of help with clearing rubbish in return for being able to take rubbish from business to re-cycling to the yard for free.
- 6) The offer was made of working together, particularly the Town Council and County Council with regard to services. The point was made that Welshpool does not wish to see any services cut before discussing the options with the Town Council first.
- 7) Cllr R Harris was generally happy with the way PCC was not going and felt that there would be tangible changes in the way the County Council is run.

- 8) Cllr R Harris would be pleased to receive any proposals on a way forward to effect savings and keep services in place. The Town Council was asked to consider this.
- 9) The meeting thanked Cllr R Harris for her honesty and for coming to meet the businesses in Welshpool. The meeting was generally happy with the responses received from Cllr R Harris.

4. Business Start Up

There was a short presentation 'business startup' by Dafydd Evans of Antur Teifi. The web site and details were issued by way of company cards. Copies of the marketing booklet are to be posted to the Town Council to make available to business.

5. Update on actions since last meeting:

5.1 Welshpool Town Council Community Plan

The meeting was updated on the Community Plan consultation which is taking place from 17th February to 23rd March.

5.2. Main Line Train Service

The meeting was updated on progress towards the first phase of an hourly service, improved Coast line service and a scenic train stopping at Welshpool. The final report has been issued to the Minister and a meeting with her has been arranged for 12th March. A statement is expected soon after that date.

5.3 Ally by W H Smith to Puzzle Square

The secretary has contacted W H Smiths to gain to renovate by decoration the ally next to them and to provide some lighting. Consent has been given for the works.

5.4 Puzzle Square block paviours

The secretary has contacted Powys County Council again over the block paviour repairs needed to the area by the paint shop in Puzzle Square. It appears that the PCC Officers do not wish to use a management order to rectify the matter. The Town Council's solicitor is preparing a letter for PCC pointing out their responsibilities.

5.5 Town Centre Sculpture

The Town Council discussed the idea at their Planning, Development and Environment Committee last Wednesday. Further thought will be given to the project after the public consultation on the Community Plan is completed.

5.6 Alcohol Control for Town Centre

Meetings with the Police have been held, the Town Council has given its backing and the final part of the jigsaw is the survey being carried out via the Community Plan. Then the application can be put forward to Powys County Council.

6. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be Monday 17th March 2014 at 7pm in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall.