

TDCC Business Meeting

Date: 4th July 2017

Location: Tavistock Room, The Bedford Hotel, Tavistock

In Attendance

Committee Members

Chairman, Mike Harper (MH)

Social Secretary, Clair Wellsbury-Nye (CWN)

Secretary, Richard Cosgrave (RLC)

Members

Tim Roberts

Tim Randell

Richard Smith

Matt Miller

Ross Ayling

Paul Williamson (for Tavistock Town Council)

Visitors

Martyn Hall (for WCP Funeral Directors - potential members)

Apologies

Phil Ruse

Kate Royston

Angela Court

Carl Hearn

MH Opened the meeting with a summary of the committee meeting that had just ended including...

Letter to WDBC querying asking the council for transparency and clarity on the process they intend to put in place for the distribution of the £122k central-government provided rates-relief fund. Particular concern was raised over the plan to refund Devon County Council the rates that they pay on schools – a fund provided for local-business relief being used by the borough-council to subsidise the county-council. This letter is similar to one sent by BID and if no adequate response is heard soon both TDCC and BID are minded to go-public with their concerns. This report prompted a short

discussion between members on the way that different streams of local media do or do not tackle contentious issues.

MH - Reported that Annette Baskerville-Smith (ABS) had attended initial meeting of Tavistock Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan Board (TTCNB). Appears this is (as thought) the Tavistock Town Council Local Plan. CWN to attend follow-up meeting on Friday 7th July.

MH – Had conversations with the team managing the Town Council works to the Town’s Pannier Market and Duke Street/Brook Street Estate. Two things (1) the work is to be phased so that the traffic and visual disruption caused by the necessary scaffolding is minimised and (2) the scaffolding is to be done in such a way as to permit the obscured shops to display their name during the works. Finally, TDCC have been promised space on the scaffolding during the Goose Fair for use by TDCC to promote the town and the role of TDCC.

MH – Conversations with the team managing Goose Fair 2017 have promised TDCC space on the railing around the Drake statue at the southern end of Plymouth Road.

Date of TDCC Business Meeting – MH voiced for the Committee the general opinion that moving the TDCC Business Meeting to 1st Tuesday had not worked out well. We tried 1st Tuesdays and it didn’t work. Reported that we had decided to move the meetings back to 1st Monday of the month (even though this means the Bank-Holiday Monday issue comes back). No objections raised.

MH put forward proposal to co-opt Rhiannon Spurgeon to post of Vice-Chair. Agreed by all.

CWN gave brief report about website and Members should now get their words sorted. Details of what is expected of members to go out in newsletter. This report generated a wide-ranging discussion. MH emphasised how the chamber should be encouraging B2B activity in Tavistock and not just promoting the retail side of things. In turn Matt Miller and Tim Roberts spoke about how members can help each-other either directly by offering discounted-services or through sharing experiences at meetings.

In turn MH led this discussion into a straw-poll of how members felt about the way the Brexit negotiations were being handled. The general feeling of the room was that everyone is putting everything is on hold. A couple of speakers pointed out that we make very little in the UK and what we do export (e.g. private-sector education) seems to be a convenient political target and that damage to those sectors in the home market will reduce the UK export market even further.

Within these discussions there was a side-step to comment on occupancy rates in the town and it was noted that some land-lords are asking unrealistic rents in the hope of getting planning permission for converting retail/business space into residential units. It was also pointed out that the traditional route of local businesses to start with a stall in the Pannier Market and grow to the point of taking on premises had gone into reverse with businesses abandoning premises to take a stall in the market. Paul Williamson on behalf of Tavistock Town Council pointed out that TCC occupancy rates were very high and he felt that this reflected well on the TCC policy to have lower rents and higher occupancy - his comments were well received.

The challenges of Kingdom House were briefly touched upon with frustration expressed that the team running the property need help developing a business-plan that would make good use of the building going forward.

A question from the floor about the Tavistock Carnival reminded the Committee that we should be involved some way but it was too late for 2017. RLC mentioned that the lack of lorries due to

insurance issues was hindering participation. MH volunteered (in a professional capacity) to see if he could find out anything that could get help with this issue.

From the Carnival, we moved onto Goose fair – there was an appeal for help on the TDCC stand made by MH who dramatically reminded everyone present of lack of member support last year. MH then got ribbed because the people who had been there were in the room and added up to more people than he had claimed helped. BUT the point made by MH was valid, insufficient support last year – must do better in 2017.

CWN and ABS are working on trying to a regular daytime ‘meet the Chamber’ event for those who are only in Tavistock during the day (i.e. Breakfast and evening are not suitable).

Closing comments

Next breakfast event 20th July – Book now

Next Business Meeting – MONDAY 7th August