

**Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting held at Corsham Town Hall  
on Wednesday 11 January 2023**

- Present** Councillor N Farmer (Chair)  
Councillors A Brown, M Jackson, A White and R Williams
- In Attendance** Ms S Leigh (Community Services Officer (Arts))  
Mrs S Thomas (Head of Community Services)  
Mrs T Walpole (Community Services Officer (Tourism and Events))
- In Attendance Online** Councillor S Abbott  
Councillor D Jarman (Committee Member)  
E Bryant (Portable Wellbeing Studio)  
R Pomfrett (Stay Safe Initiative)

**CS 15/22 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Councillor T Bush.

**CS 16/22 Public Question Time and Petitions**

There were none.

**CS 17/22 Declarations of Interest**

To receive any Declaration(s) of Interest under Corsham Town Council's Code of Conduct issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Cllr D Jarman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 – Public Art Projects, given his links to the Peacock Arts Trail, as his wife is one of the organisers.

Cllr Abbott declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 – Business Support Update, given his links to the High Street where his wife rents a retail unit.

**CS 18/22 Matters arising from the Minutes of the Community Services Committee meeting held on 9 November 2022.**

There were none.

**CS 19/22 Community Wellbeing Update (*Minute CS 4/22*)**

The Committee was updated, via a report, on the recent work undertaken by the Community Services Officer (Health and Wellbeing) and the Town Council's Community Wellbeing Working Group, focussing on families, older/vulnerable people and young

people. Discussion took place over the Warm Spaces initiative and the leaflet produced by the Town Council, promoting the warm spaces in Corsham. It was suggested that copies of the leaflet could be made available in the Post Office and at Barnett Brothers.

Cllr Brown highlighted the work undertaken by the Community Services Officer (Health and Wellbeing) on the Cost of Living/Cooking Sessions and offered his thanks on the success of the project.

The report was noted.

### **Grant Applications**

The Committee was asked to consider two grant application requests. Both were for match-funding with the Area Board's Local Youth Network, and both projects had previously received funding from the Town Council.

#### **i) The Portable Wellbeing Studio**

Ella Bryant from The Portable Wellbeing Studio attended the meeting, asking for funding of £2,500 to extend their current residency by 24 weeks so they can deliver art therapy to a new cohort of pupils, via group work and one-to-one sessions. (The Local Youth Network (LYN) would also be considering a match-funding grant request at its meeting on 12 January and The Corsham School was also funding project.) The report provided on their previous residency showed clear evidence of the improvement in the mental health of those students who had taken previously taken part. The residency had also included training teaching assistants, giving them the tools to work with pupils experiencing anxiety, and further training of school staff was planned. The work included meetings with parents/carers of those children being supported.

Questions/suggestions from Councillors included running drop-in sessions at lunchtimes for other pupils; checking on the progress of those pupils who had previously had therapy and asking whether having the Wellbeing Studio on site had helped to start more discussions about mental health among the wider student population.

#### **Resolved:**

To agree to grant the Portable Wellbeing Studio the £2,500 requested (from the Youth Activities budget) to enable them to extend their residency at The Corsham School.

#### **ii) The Stay Safe Initiative**

Richard Pomfrett from the Stay Safe Initiative attended the meeting, with a request for £750 to continue developing the Stay Safe Initiative's online safety programme to pupils at The Corsham School, specifically Year 7s and Year 9s in the 2022/23 school year. (The Local Youth Network (LYN) would also be considering a match-funding grant request at its meeting on 12 January and The Corsham School was also funding the project.) The ever-evolving programme was designed to help hundreds of children to stay safe online, and also educate their families/carers, with an aim to help young people make positive decisions online.

In response to a question regarding the year groups chosen, it was explained that Year 7 (age 11/12) was targeted to help with the transition from primary school and the changes in online life that came with that (children having a mobile phone for the first time, making new connections, having more independent choice, etc.) Year 9 was chosen as they were at an age (13/14) when they began having relationships, so they were educated about sharing images online, how to use the

online world appropriately and the impact their online presence could have on their future ambitions.

The evaluation process for the project was changing and Richard Pomfrett was happy to share the anonymous results and feedback from those taking part, as well as parents/carers and teachers, with the Town Council.

**Resolved:**

To agree to grant the Stay Safe Initiative the £750 requested (from the Youth Activities budget) to enable them to continue their work at The Corsham School.

**We Are The People Update** – Cllr Bush was unable to attend the meeting to give the expected update on the We Are The People project she was running in her role as a Research Fellow at Bath Spa University. Following a community event as part of the project held on 25 November, it was proposed that an action group be set up allowing disabled people to work together to resolve the issues most important to them. The group would be supported by We Are The People and, when necessary, the Town Council.

It was hoped that Cllr Bush would be able to update the Community Wellbeing Working Group meeting due to take place on 16 January, and a follow-up meeting with Cllr Brown, Chair of the Working Group, and the Head of Community Services was planned.

A more detailed update would be given to the Community Services Committee at its next meeting in March.

**CS 20/22 Public Art Projects (*Minute CS 5/22 and others*)**

The Community Services Officer (Arts) updated the Committee on the various public art projects on which the Town Council was currently focusing.

**Potley Community Arts Project** –The commissioned artists, Caroline Rudge and Rachel Heard, had begun work on the project, with initial branding created and links made within the community, with a planned timetable of engagement events. A meeting had been arranged for the artists to discuss their plans with the Town Council's Public Art Task Group.

**Cross Keys** – Plans for the plinth were moving forward, with the company who built the dry stone wall at Cross Keys now commissioned to create a round plinth, with appropriate fixings, at the site on which the public artworks would stand. It was hoped that the plinth would be in situ by May 2023, and once a date was confirmed the Community Services Officer (Arts) would work with the Public Art Task Group to begin the process of commissioning/borrowing artworks to display at the site.

**Peacock Arts Trail** – The Town Council's support for the Peacock Arts Trail (7-15 October 2023) was continuing as per previous years, including grant funding, with up to four artists using the Town Hall as a Trail venue and a youth art competition, with an environmental theme, planned. Winning entries would then be displayed at the Town Hall. Further reports would be given to the Committee in the run-up to the Trail.

The update was noted.

**CS 21/22 Christmas in Corsham/Christmas Lights Switch On (*Minute CS 11/22 and others*)**

The Community Services Officer (Tourism and Events) reported on the Town Council's Christmas-related activities.

Christmas in Corsham, as a place to visit/shop, had been promoted with advertising in various local magazines and papers, as well as on radio, via continued sponsorship of the weather bulletin on the Heart radio station, which also highlighted the free parking. December's Place Informatics footfall figures had not been received at the time of the meeting, but quantitative data would show whether the advertising, etc, had improved visitor numbers to the town centre.

The Wishing Tree event on 26 November had seen its biggest turnout yet, with over 100 wishes made and hung on the tree.

The Christmas Lights Switch On took place on 2 December. The Christmas Market, featuring 32 stalls in the High Street, began earlier, at 3pm, and the feedback from traders on the early start had been very positive so this would be done again in 2023. The live music - Hip Route and the Shing-a-Lings at the Town Hall and the Rock Choir and Corsham Windband at the other end of the High Street - had been very popular. Santa's Grotto had been very busy with a queue of children until the end of the evening and the environmentally-friendly wooden gifts handed out were well-received. It was felt that the event had been the busiest and best yet.

The update was noted. Councillors offered their thanks to all the staff, and the Tourism and Events Officer in particular, for their hard work and excellent organisation.

#### **CS 22/22 Business Support Update (*Minute CS 13/22 and others*)**

**Business Breakfast** – The Community Services Officer (Tourism and Events) updated the Committee on the free Business Breakfast event held at, and supported by, Digital Mansion Corsham (DMC) on 15 November. Approximately 50 local business people attended, from 8-10am, and the food was provided by High Street takeaway Tasty Bites. There were short talks from Cllr Dave Jarman, Natalie Sherman from DMC-based social media company Naturally Social and Rachael Johnson, Employment and Skills Officer, from Wiltshire Council. Those attending were invited to introduce themselves and their businesses very briefly. This was then followed by a networking session. Feedback on the session had been very positive, with those attending enjoying the drop-in format, the short pitches given by those present and the food and refreshments available.

As the breakfast format had proved successful, another was being planned for February (although lunch and evening sessions would be considered for further events), with a focus on sustainability. Guest speakers would include representatives from the Federation of Small Businesses, Action Net Zero and the SWLEP's Growth Hub.

A question was asked about the involvement of the Corsham Chamber of Commerce. The Town Council's event, and business support work, was seen as working alongside the Chamber, which had begun holding the first of its own events after being dormant through the pandemic. Those running the Chamber would be invited to attend February's Business Breakfast, with the chance to give a presentation on the benefits of joining the organisation.

**Fiver Fest** – Following the success of July's Fiver Fest – with 23 local retailers offering items to buy for £5 - it was hoped to be able to repeat the fortnight-long event in March. Around 12 retailers had so far expressed an interest in taking part.

The update was noted.

#### **CS 23/22 Corsham Eco Fair 22 April 2023**

The Head of Community Services and Community Services Officer (Tourism and Events) were working with the Town Council's Environmental Project Officer and members of the Town Council's Environment Task Group and Corsham Climate Action (CCA) on this year's Eco Fair. The Fair was due to be held on 22 April, globally-recognised as Earth Day.

Nineteen stalls were already booked, including CCA and Fairtrade. Action Net Zero , a community interest company that helps communities reach their environmental aims, would be sponsoring the event, with their support in kind (access to their data base of potential stallholders and resources) rather than financial.

The Fair would be held on the pedestrian area of the High Street (so no road closure required) and at DMC and would run from 10am-2pm. The annual children's Easter Trail would link up with the Fair, running from 31 March to 26 April, and have an environmental theme, probably around bugs and insects. It was also planned to have a Recycling Quiz on the day, to link up with the Corsham Recycling Hub, and promote the campaign to make Corsham a Plastic Free Community.

The update was noted.

#### **CS 24/22 Coronation of King Charles III (*Minute CS 9/22*)**

Following the discussion at November's meeting, the Committee was asked for its suggestions on how the Coronation could be marked in Corsham. Suggestions from Officers included a design a flag competition for children; a children's Crown Trail around the town centre shops and businesses; launching the Summer Busking Saturdays on 6 May with a 'Coronation Concert' featuring three busking performers in the town centre rather than one; a write a poem for Corsham/the Coronation, with the winning entry possibly being set to music, and acting as a hub/producing information on running a street party. All were thought to be good ideas so would be explored further.

Suggestions from the Committee included a screening of the Coronation in the town centre; a 'Portrait of the King' competition, with entries put up around town for the Coronation/bank holiday weekend; a light projection on the Town Hall and a fancy dress parade. These ideas would be researched in more detail. Much of what could be achieved would depend on the level of support and availability from staff and Councillors. Other organisations, such as The Pound, would be contacted to see what plans they had to mark the occasion and whether there were opportunities to work together or promote each other's events.

#### **CS 25/22 Covid 19 Social Study**

In March 2020, the Social Behavioural Research Group at University College London (UCL) launched a Covid-19 Social Study with the aim of identifying the psychological and social effects of the pandemic on the UK population. A report on the study was released in September 2022. Within the Executive Summary seven priority areas of action were identified:

- i) Focus on the most vulnerable groups
- ii) Invest in mental health services
- iii) Expand community-based support
- iv) Embed transparency and integrity in health policy
- v) Invest in social and behavioural research
- vi) Foster social solidarity and cohesion
- vii) Plan for the next pandemic or health emergency

The Committee was asked to consider the priority areas – specifically i), ii), iii), vi) and vii) – in relation to the Community Wellbeing work already undertaken by the Town Council and the actions within the Strategic Plan 2022-2026. It was noted that vii) Plan for the next pandemic or health emergency had been incorporated into the Town Council's Emergency Plan by the Head of Technical Services.

The Committee considered that, while there was still much more that could be done (budgets permitting), the speed at which the Town Council responded to the effects of the pandemic was something to be proud of. The setting up of the Community Wellbeing

Working Group and the creation of the Community Services Officer (Health and Wellbeing) role had allowed the Town Council to focus on the needs of those most affected within the vulnerable groups identified in the study, with our support particularly offered to families of under-5s, young people and older/vulnerable residents. Help was now available through grant funding; signposting; commissioning services as appropriate (for example RISE Trust's work with disadvantaged families and the detached youth work); working with and connecting external stakeholders, and information gathering and sharing. With Community Wellbeing a Strategic Plan priority for 2022-26, it was felt that the actions and objectives within the Plan would continue to help residents of all ages with the ongoing psychological and social effects of the pandemic highlighted in the Covid-19 Social Study.

The report was noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 9.32pm. There were no members of the public present.

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CHAIRMAN

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DATE