

**Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting held at Corsham Town Hall
on Wednesday 20 September 2023**

Present	Councillor N Farmer (Chair) Councillors A Brown, T Bush, G McCaffery
In Attendance	Cllr A Mackie Mrs S Leigh (Community Services Officer – Arts) Mrs S Thomas (Head of Community Services)
In Attendance Online	Cllr D Jarman (Committee Member) Cllr A Thomas (Committee Member) E Drage (Corsham Youth Zone) E Bryant (The Portable Wellbeing Studio)

CS 25/23 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors A White and R Williams.

CS 26/23 Public Question Time and Petitions

There were none.

CS 27/23 Declarations of Interest

Cllr D Jarman declared a non-pecuniary interest in *Agenda Item 7 iii) Public Art Projects – The Town Council and this year's Peacock Arts Trail* as his wife is one of the volunteer organisers of the Trail.

CS 28/23 Matters arising from the Minutes of the Community Services Committee meeting held on 26 July 2023

There were none.

CS 29/23 Grant Applications (*Minute CS 19/23*)

One grant application had been received.

The Portable Wellbeing Studio

At the meeting held on 26 July, the Committee agreed, in principle, to a request from The Portable Wellbeing Studio to fund its continued residence at The Corsham School. While the Committee was very supportive of the work being done by The Portable Wellbeing Studio, and agreed to consider a full grant application, there were some concerns and conditions which needed to be addressed. These included direct feedback from The Corsham School on the wider benefits of arts therapy among its staff and pupils; whether the Corsham Area Board's Local Youth Network would also be willing to fund the project

again; whether other funding sources were being sought; if training teachers and teaching assistants in arts therapy techniques was benefitting more pupils and creating a legacy, which would allow The Portable Wellbeing Studio to move on and what the Studio's exit strategy would be. It was also felt that, should the Committee agree to fund The Portable Wellbeing Studio again, then this would be for the last time.

An initial grant application had been received, addressing these questions/comments, for £2,000 to extend The Portable Wellbeing Studio's residency for 24 weeks, with funding also being sought from both the school and the Corsham Area Board. However, the Area Board was unable to fund the application under its current rule of not funding the same project in any one financial year. As a result, the application presented to the Committee was for a reduced residency of 12 weeks, at a total cost of £3,000, with £1,000 already agreed with The Corsham School and £2,000 being sought from the Town Council.

Given that the questions/comments previously raised had been addressed; the new plans to run a lunchtime Art Therapy Club for those young people who had previously accessed the Studio, and a proposal to become either a Community Interest Company or a charity, the Committee was minded to approve the application.

Resolved: That The Portable Wellbeing Studio's application for a grant of £2,000 to extend its residency at The Corsham School be approved.

Suggestions for The Portable Wellbeing Studio moving forward included encouraging the teaching staff/teaching assistants who had undergone art therapy training to share this with their peers and become mental health ambassadors within the school; to contact Wiltshire Community Foundation for their help, support and funding options; to look at the National Lottery Fund's new Million Hours Fund for young people, and to link up with Corsham Youth Zone.

CS 30/23 Corsham Youth Zone

Ahead of the Corsham Youth Zone (CYZ) funding stream moving to Community Services' budgets in 2024/25, and the upcoming Town Council budget discussions, Emma Drage, from CYZ attended the meeting to give a presentation on CYZ's work (report *attached*)

CYZ currently had 112 young people signed up as members with around 30 attending each week, although this can increase to 40-50 some weeks.

It was explained that CYZ was in the process of becoming a charity which would enable the group to apply for grants from a wider range of funders. Gaining charity status had been a requirement advised by Wiltshire Community Foundation: the Foundation was giving CYZ £5,000 a year for three years on the basis that they would get charitable status.

Staffing was now less of an issue with 28 volunteers available to help and interviews taking place to fill the vacant paid roles. By the end of October, a complete staff team would be in place which would enable CYZ to offer its young people a full range of activities. Annual staff costs were £13,000 a year, for four paid, part-time members of staff, for four hours a week, 50 weeks of the year. CYZ was very grateful for the Town Council's ongoing support and its funding of £8,200 a year however, with rising costs, an increase to £9,000 in the 2024/25 financial year would help cover any shortfall and help fund materials for activities, such as food for healthy eating sessions or art materials, training courses, and fund expert/guest speakers. The Committee agreed to support this increase as part of the upcoming budget discussions.

A lot of the young people attending needed support with their mental health. Some were struggling to pay the £1 entry fee so were encouraged to undertake tasks on the night instead. Others were arriving hungry, meaning that CYZ was now offering Pasta Pots, Pot Noodles and toasties as part of the tuck offering each week.

Questions/comments from the Committee included asking about the number of young carers attending CYZ and suggesting making links with one of the participants at the recent MOD Family Day who was running Lego Robotics sessions.

The Committee reiterated its support for CYZ and its thanks to Emma Drage and her team for all they are doing to help Corsham's young people.

Resolved: To support an £800 increase of funding for Corsham Youth Zone in the 2024/25 budget discussions.

CS 31/23 Public Art Projects (Minutes CS 20/23, 06/23, 32/22 and others)

The Committee was updated on the Town Council's various public art projects.

i) Potley and Portland Rise Art Community Project (PACT)

Caroline Rudge and Rachel Heard, the two artists commissioned to run the PACT project, had met with the Town Council's Public Art Task Group to present three design suggestions (*attached*) based on the feedback from the various community engagement sessions held.

The Community Services Committee felt it was important for the technical/logistical elements of each design, and its proposed location, to be discussed and a feasibility study to be carried out by the Head of Technical Services. This would highlight any potential issues regarding the production and installation of the designs before the artists went back to the community for their feedback on the proposals, particularly if it was felt that a design would not work for any reason.

There had been prior discussions regarding incorporating repainting the mural in Potley, painted some years ago by local residents, into the project, as well as creating a design on the shipping container used by The Brunel Shed. The artists now felt that while both were worthwhile projects, they would need to be worked up and funded separately to PACT. Further discussions would take place about both potential projects.

ii) Cross Keys Plinth

The plinth had been completed so work was now underway on a commissioning brief for the site. Opportunities to have public artwork on loan were also being investigated, or to purchase a prefabricated piece. One suggestion was to work with artist Steven Tomlinson (who had been shortlisted for the initial Cross Keys project pre-pandemic) on purchasing one of his conker designs, which would be site appropriate given it would sit under a horse chestnut tree. There were concerns, however, about the fact that the artist was not local.

Another suggestion was to work with local artist and sculptor Jonny Sanders, who could create a series of large, glass fibre sheep that could then be decorated by local schoolchildren, members of Corsham Youth Zone, etc along the lines of the Gromit Trail in Bristol or the pigs and lions that had featured in Bath in previous years.

Cllr Farmer would discuss the proposal in more detail and get an idea of the costs involved. The Arts Officer would contact local schools to see whether they would be interested in taking part.

Cllr Thomas volunteered to talk to her neighbour, illustrator and sculptor Anna Currey, to see whether she would be happy to loan a piece of her artwork in the short-term, should it be suitable. Cllr Mackie also suggested contacting John

Garrihy, widower of sculptor Andrea Garrihy, to see if he would be willing to loan any of her pieces. Cllr Jarman would share contact details for Dan Allen, Head of Bath School of Art, Film and Media at Bath Spa University, as the university may also have artwork available.

iii) Peacock Arts Trail (7-15 October 2023)

Plans were moving forward for the Peacock Arts Trail. The Town Council would be hosting two artists in the Main Hall, Katherine Stone and Emma Debs, as well as exhibiting entries in the Youth Art Competition. Work created by members of Corsham Youth Zone during the four art workshops co-ordinated by the Peacock Arts Trail's Rachael Holtom, would also be displayed.

The Trail would begin with a launch event, hosted and run by the Town Council, on the evening of Friday 6 October at the Town Hall.

The update was noted.

CS 32/23 Business Support Update (*Minutes CS 21/23, 09/23 and others*)

The Committee was updated on the work being done to support local businesses.

i) Business Networking Events

A Business Leader's Breakfast, again at Digital Mansion Corsham, would take place from 8-10am on Tuesday 26 September. The theme would be Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), volunteering and community involvement, with talks from Cathy Berry, Head of Social Values for Babcock International and Sharon Turnbull, of Turnbull HR, who volunteers for Saxon Group Riding for the Disabled. The pastries would be supplied by Becky's Bakeri (local Norwegian bakery business). Eighteen tickets had been booked so far.

Cllr Jarman suggested running live surveys at the Business Breakfasts, with QR codes on screen to make the sessions more interactive. The technology required was relatively simple. Cllr Jarman would ask his University of Bristol colleagues for help in furthering the idea.

ii) Retail Map

Tear-off pads of the new retail map had been distributed to various local businesses with very positive feedback. The Town Council's grounds team was continuing with the ongoing programme to refurbish the noticeboards and then large-scale versions of the map would be fitted to go inside them all. An interactive version of the map, incorporating photographs or logos of the businesses along with links to their website or Facebook pages, was being worked on and would feature on both the Town Council and Visit Corsham websites.

iii) Business Health Survey

The survey had received 14 responses, despite extensions to the deadline. A report on the results had been produced. It was felt that the lack of engagement with the survey highlighted the need for the Town Council to interact more with the larger businesses in the town. There may be an opportunity to collaborate on this with the work of the Environmental Task Group and the Town Council's new Environmental Project Officer.

The update was noted.

CS 33/23 **Events Update (*Minutes CS 22/23, 35/22 and others*)**

The Committee was updated on the Town Council's various events and summer activities.

i) Summer Busking Saturdays (6 May-30 September)

The Summer Busking Saturdays for 2023 would finish at the end of September. Feedback had been overwhelmingly positive. Martingate had also been very supportive, funding 50% of the costs. Plans were already underway for December, with the Corsham Windband playing on 2, 9 and 23 December and St Aldhelm's Choir performing on 16 December.

ii) Summer Trails (22 July-31 August)

Three trails had taken place through the summer holidays: the Sunflower Trail, aimed at pre-school children and sponsored by The Corsham Bookshop had 30 forms returned; the Pokémon Trail, sponsored by Automattic Comics/The Corsham Toyshop had 254 entries, with winners in four age groups selected to win Pokémon prizes, and the Back to School Trail, aimed at parents/carers, in support of shops and businesses in Corsham selling 'school' products, which had five completed 'Parent Passports' returned. While this was not a high number, it did mean that at least six of the 12 businesses featured had sold a 'back to school' product each time, and it was likely that other Passports had not been completed but had still promoted local retailers and food outlets.

iii) Street Fair (9 September 2023)

Fifty-two stalls had booked for the Street Fair, including a number of local charities and groups, as well as the usual trading and craft stalls. There were a few cancellations in the run-up due to the extreme heat forecast, but around 45 stalls took part, with the ice-cream van and KettleSmith's doing particularly well. The music stage was located on the rear lawn of the Digital Mansion again, with performances from The Real Imposters, saxophonist Sam Bernald-Ross and Pipe Dream. Busking performances in Martingate saw keyboard player Lenny Osler and Corsham Windband play. Due to the heat, the Dog Show, run by Dogs for Health, was unable to take place, although the organisation's volunteers still had a stall but without their dogs. The free children's activities proved popular again.

The heat did seem to impact visitor numbers slightly, but attendance was still good and stallholders were happy. It was another great team effort from everyone.

Cllr Farmer requested that the fee for performers be increased back to the minimum £100 the Town Council used to pay, which the Head of Community Services agreed to do.

iv) Christmas Lights (1 December)

Twenty-six stalls had booked for the Christmas Market element of the Christmas Lights Switch On. St John Ambulance had also confirmed their availability to provide first-aid support. A balloon modeller was also booked, as was Father Christmas. The Rock Choir and Corsham Windband would play in the busking spot. On the Town Hall stage, folk duo Fly Yeti Fly would open proceedings (the act sourced by The Pound under our Service Level Agreement) before the lights were switched on, with local band The Real Imposters playing for the second half of the evening.

A further update on the plans for the Christmas Lights event would be given at November's Committee meeting.

The update was noted.

The Committee was updated on the recent work undertaken by the Community Services Officer (Community Wellbeing) and the Town Council's Community Wellbeing Working Group, focussing on families, older/vulnerable people and young people. It was also updated on Cllr Bush's plans to set up a Disabled People's Organisation.

i) Get Active! Youth Event (25 September)

The Town Council would be running an event to promote local clubs, groups and organisations to under-18s, and their parents/carers at Springfield Community Campus, from 2-5pm, on Monday 25 September. Eighteen clubs had signed up to come along, including Corsham Badminton Club, Corsham Rugby Club, the Air Cadets, PBS Dance, Pound Arts' Open Mic Night and Matsu Juku Martial Arts. The event had been promoted through all the schools and on social media.

ii) Visits to Local Care Homes

During the summer, Cllr Brown and the Community Wellbeing Officer had made fact-finding visits to Corsham's care homes. Hungerford House and Warrington Lodge/Claremont had good programmes of activities for residents. The GreenSquare Accord-run Holton House and Jargeau Court, both sheltered housing complexes, had far less in the way of activities, although the Holton House residents were doing more for themselves, including running a knitting club and day trips, and creative projects had been run there in the past. Sarah Gilmartin, of Inclusive Intergenerational Dance (iID), had run arts projects at both sites and had raised concerns about loneliness issues among residents. Cllr Brown was planning to return to Jargeau Court to talk to residents there to see what activities and support could be offered.

iii) Dogs for Health Therapy Dogs Project

Unfortunately, as the Dogs for Health Dog Show could not be run at the Street Fair because of the extreme heat, recruiting volunteers to undertake training, with their dogs, was proving difficult. It was hoped that Dogs for Health volunteers would have a stall at the Christmas Lights Switch On, along with their own dogs, to encourage dog owners to find out more. Cllr McCaffery suggested that the Dogs for Health stall should be situated next to Guide Dogs for the event, to capture the interest of as many dog-owners and dog-lovers as possible. The Head of Community Services would contact Dogs for Health to see if they would like to come along to the Christmas Lights Switch On and were happy to be sited next to Guide Dogs.

iv) Priory Cross Community Allotment

One of the allotment plots at Priory Cross had been proving difficult to allocate so it had been suggested that a community group, such as Souper Friday or Corsham Foodbank, might be interested in taking it on for free. While there was interest, neither group, nor any of the others contacted, had the volunteer support needed to take on an allotment. The Town Council had also been contacted by a student looking to run a community food project in the area as part of his PhD. He had been invited to visit Priory Cross, but the allotment was far too small for his needs. The allotment had since been taken by a resident so was no longer available but, should another plot become available at some point in the future, community use was always an option.

v) Next Community Wellbeing Working Group Meeting

The next meeting of the Community Wellbeing Group would take place on Tuesday 7 November, with a pre-meeting for those Councillors on the group at 11.30am and the main meeting at 12pm. The focus would be on helping older/vulnerable people

suffering from loneliness and what more the Town Council, and other groups and organisations, could do.

vi) Disabled People's Organisation

A meeting for those running/supporting the DPO had taken place on 18 September. The group was now known as SameDifference and was setting itself up as an official community organisation, with the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary positions filled. A small Steering Group would now lead the work, calling on the support of other stakeholders, Councillors and officers as required, with quarterly meetings held with the wider group and the main aim to be a central hub for information and sign-posting for disabled people within the Corsham Community Area.

The Town Council would continue to help and support SameDifference as required and work with its members to ensure disabled people were represented across all areas of its work and the Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

The update was noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 9.29pm. There were no members of the public present.

CHAIR

DATE