

## Steering Group for the Porlock High Street Support Group MINUTES

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 JANUARY 2021 AT 7.00 PM

Remote Virtual Meeting via Zoom

*The Meeting was digitally recorded and is available at*

*<https://porlockparishcouncil.org/phssg/>*

**Present:** Duncan McCanlis (PPC Councillor and Zoom meeting Host), Will Rayner (Churchgate Gallery and PPC Councillor), Stuart Weaver (The Big Cheese), Lesley Thornton (PHSSG Administrator) & David Thornton (The Bagatelle), Rachael White (Churchgate Gallery), Malcolm McCoy (PPC Chair), Jane Dyer (Jana Henrie), Melody & David Hawtin (Melody Art), Andy Milne (SW&T Councillor), John Ware (PPC Councillor), Deborah Stanyon (Porlock Visitor Centre Manager/PVTA), Barry Hitchcox (High Street resident), David & Sylvia Hancock (members of the public)

Richard Maw (PPC Councillor) joined the meeting at 7.20pm

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF HISTORY

Duncan McCanlis welcomed all those present to what he hoped, subject to agreement of the PHSSG by Somerset West & Taunton Council (SW&T) and Porlock Parish Council (PPC), would be the first meeting of the Porlock High Street Support Group (PHSSG). He asked attendees to mute their microphones to avoid too much background noise and to raise their hand to speak.

Mr. McCanlis explained that the aim of the PHSSG was to decide how best to spend the £25,000 High Street Recovery Fund for the benefit of Porlock and how to work best together to achieve that as outlined on the Agenda, highlighting the need for respect and to listen.

Duncan McCanlis explained that this meeting was convened by Will Rayner, Stuart Weaver and himself, having been asked by PPC to set up another support group to deliver the High Street Recovery Fund. He added that they had previously met and had appointed Lesley Thornton as Administrator on a voluntary basis, as she had offered her expertise and time.

Mr. McCanlis explained that this meeting would not be to talk about the ideas to spend the £25,000 Fund as that would be for next time, rather, that this meeting tonight was to formally construct the Support Group by voting it in.

He explained that the first part of the meeting would be more informal, so attendees could ask questions, get answers and clarify anything before moving to the formal part of the meeting.

He suggested he went round the 'virtual room', inviting everyone to introduce themselves and briefly explain what brought them to the meeting.

Stuart Weaver explained he was on the original support group having been asked by Deborah Stanyon. After that group was disbanded, he wanted to continue to be involved to see things go forward.

Duncan McCanlis explained he was here as a PPC Councillor

Lesley Thornton explained she was now involved as the Administrator but as a High Street Trader (Bagatelle) she had been concerned that the Fund would be lost and wanted to help continue the work that had already been started by the disbanded support group.

Malcolm McCoy explained he was here as PPC Chair observing and listening, hoping everyone would come forward with some good ideas and he was keeping his fingers crossed that the new group could make this a success.

David Hancock explained that he had been involved with a 'Plan for Porlock' and was interested to see what this group put forward, and wished them all the best.

Jane Dyer explained she had been trading on the High Street as Jana Henrie for probably the longest, had experienced highs and lows, and felt this money was desperately needed, especially now and probably many times over, and that it was vital it was spent properly.

Barry Hitchcox explained he was here as an interested High Street resident, and was just observing.

Melody and David Hawtin explained they were here to offer their support as they felt strongly that Porlock had so much to offer.

David Thornton explained he owns Bagatelle with Lesley and was here to hopefully find a good way to spend the money.

Deborah Stanyon explained she was mainly here to observe, but as Visitor Centre manager was always endeavouring to do the best for Porlock and would support and embrace any new ideas in terms of the PVTA.

Andy Milne explained that he was very pleased to have secured the £25,000 grant and had thought that he and the PVTA had established a democratic process to spend the money along with suggestions from David Hancock, adding that this clearly hadn't worked and he was now interested to see how the new group sets out to spend the Fund in the few months remaining.

John Ware explained he was here as a PPC Councillor and was here to observe.

Will Rayner explained he is a PPC Councillor and also runs Churchgate Gallery. He hopes the money could be used to make everyone's life easier to combat this terrible Covid-19 crisis

Rachael White explained she has had a gallery on the High Street for over 10 years, so feels they can offer their experience as Traders and that of their customers.

## **2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Duncan McCanlis invited anyone to ask questions.

Deborah Stanyon asked a procedural question, if the meeting was being run under PC Standing orders and Code of Conduct procedures and policies.

Duncan McCanlis confirmed that that was what we had been asked to do and what we were aiming to do.

Lesley Thornton asked if she could read out from an email from Tim and Anita from Bramdowns (formerly the Victorian Tearooms) as requested. She confirmed they were unable to make this meeting but were interested in joining the PHSSG and a Traders Group. She asked to add them as nominees to join the PHSSG.

Will Rayner then confirmed that, at this stage of the process, we are forming the group and then will put together a questionnaire to ask people, particularly the High Street Traders, how best to use the money, whether it be to improve the appearance of Porlock with floral displays, for instance, or on promotion and he looked forward to seeing what ideas came in. He also explained that plans could be changed if an idea was not deliverable, adding that as things stand there would only be 10 months to spend the by Christmas this year once the Indicative Plan is approved by SW&T. He confirmed that, going forward public participation would always be welcomed, ongoing consultation would take place throughout, with an 'executive' taking all this on board when making the final decisions.

David & Melody Hawtin asked about the timescale and whether there were limitations or criteria for how the money is spent, for instance, if it could be spent on 5 to 10 projects or if it had to be spent on one big project.

Will Rayner explained that they would look at lots of ideas, short term deliverable projects with hopefully, some legacy.

Duncan McCanlis added that the Fund could be spent on a whole number of things, that they could employ people or offer training, for instance.

Richard Maw joined the meeting at 7.20pm and introduced himself as a PPC Councillor who had lived in Porlock for three years, who joined the PPC two years ago and who is now Treasurer and Chair of Finance on PPC.

Lesley Thornton added that the Fund should be spent on projects aimed at the High Street and that there was not scope to spend the money in the wider Porlock area.

Duncan McCanlis suggested that we did not need to break at this point and we would continue with the more formal part of the meeting.

**3. THE ADMINISTRATOR WILL RECORD THE NAMES OF ALL WHO ARE CURRENTLY STILL PRESENT AT THE MEETING. THOSE STILL PRESENT WILL REMAIN IN THE MEETING FOR THE REMAINING ITEMS AND WILL EACH HAVE A VOTE.**

The Administrator explained that the purpose of this Item on the Agenda was to agree and record who was eligible to vote in the following more formal part of the meeting. Duncan McCanlis explained that the Steering Group that was set up by PPC and the High Street Traders are the people who should have a vote and asked if anyone had an argument against this.

Lesley Thornton added that, as Bagatelle was being represented at the meeting by her husband David Thornton, she would not be voting, adding that she would record the vote using the name of the business, one vote per business.

The Administrator recorded those eligible to vote as PPC Cllr Duncan McCanlis, PPC Cllr Will Rayner, The Big Cheese, Jana Henrie, Churchgate Gallery, The Bagatelle and Melody Art.

Will Rayner did not vote on Items 4, 5 or 6, ensuring Churchgate Gallery only had one vote.

**4. DISCUSS AND APPROVE A PROPOSAL TO FORM A PHSSG OF ABOUT 7 MEMBERS, MADE UP OF HIGH STREET TRADERS AND PPC COUNCILLORS WITH A MAJORITY OF TRADERS, UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 10 MEMBERS IN TOTAL FOR THE PHSSG AS A WHOLE**

Duncan McCanlis explained that SW&T had said the group should be trader-led, so the principle is to have a majority of traders, those from the Steering Group and leave a couple of places for future co-option with a maximum of ten people in total, as over that number it tends to become unmanageable.

Lesley Thornton explained that if Melody Art wanted to join the PHSSG and there were not enough agreed places for High Street Traders, Bagatelle had agreed to stand down as Lesley would be involved with the group anyway as the Administrator.

Melody & David Hawtin commented that they knew there had been problems and whether the group would start with a clean slate. Melody also wanted to thank Andy Milne for all his hard work in getting the Fund.

Duncan McCanlis echoed Melody's thanks to Andy Milne and specifically asked that this be minuted. He added that he did not foresee any problems going forward and felt very positive seeing all the people present and the feedback they had received from the letters sent out. He also explained that Lisa Redston, the Economic Development Manager for SW&T who oversees these grants, said at the last PPC meeting that it was fabulous seeing so much interest from Porlock High Street Traders and other, bigger Councils struggle to get any Trader engagement.

Malcolm McCoy added that we were starting with a clean sheet but there was no plan B.

Duncan McCanlis asked for a proposer to form a PHSSG made up of High Street Traders and PPC Councillors, with a majority of Traders, up to a maximum of 10, which might include co-opted members (Agenda Item 5).

Richard Maw apologised for not asking sooner, but questioned what defined a 'Trader' adding that he had discussed this with Lesley Thornton (who had sent him a list, published on the PPC website, of all the High Street Traders contacted). He commented that what he saw in front of him at this meeting was not as broad a selection, as there were no pubs or B&Bs present. He felt that it should be a wide spectrum of people involved rather than the narrow one as he was seeing and that it should evolve to allow other people to join.

Lesley Thornton confirmed that all 48 Traders on the list, including all the B&Bs on the High Street and all three pubs had been delivered a letter and had been followed up by email, but they had declined to come to the meeting, most preferring just to be kept informed by email regarding the Fund and the PHSSG. She confirmed that a lot of effort had gone into encouraging everyone to attend. Mr. Maw accepted this.

Duncan McCanlis confirmed that those contacted included every business that was actually on the High Street such as The Lorna Doone, B&Bs including The Cottage, Rose bank, Myrtle Cottage. Also, Miles, First Print, etc. in the Tannery, The Overstream and Wood & Clay in Parsons Street

as they have a sign on the High Street. He added that the net had been cast wide as he feels inclusion is everything.

Rachael White added that everyone has been invited to be included and that the group is flexible and the Traders on the group can be changed.

***Approval to form a PHSSG of about 7 Members, made up of High Street Traders and PPC Councillors with a majority of Traders, up to a maximum of 10 Members in total for the PHSSG as a whole (See Item 5. below as well) was Proposed by Will Rayner and Seconded by Stuart Weaver and unanimously agreed.***

**5. DISCUSS AND APPROVE A PROPOSAL TO CO-OPT MEMBERS TO THE GROUP FROM OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 10 MEMBERS IN TOTAL FOR THE PHSSG.**

Duncan McCanlis explained that the idea was to empower the PHSSG to co-opt Members to the group from other local organisations. He confirmed that the PVTa had been asked if they would like to be involved but the letter from the new Chair of the PVTa explained they were concentrating on other projects and would not be involved this time round. He asked Deborah Stanyon if she wanted to comment or if she was Ok with that. Mrs. Stanyon did not comment. Duncan McCanlis re-iterated that they were encouraged to join.

***Approval to co-opt Members to the group from other local organisations up to a maximum of 10 Members in total for the PHSSG was Proposed by David Thornton and Seconded by Jane Dyer and unanimously agreed.***

**6. NOMINATION AND VOTE TO ELECT EACH MEMBER TO THE PHSSG**

Duncan McCanlis explained that we have been advised to vote each member in rather than as a whole, adding that both he and Will Rayner would like to put themselves forward as Councillors. He then asked if any of the three PPC Councillors present (Cllrs McCoy, Ware and Maw) wanted to stand for election.

John Ware asked if Will Rayner would be on the PHSSG as a Councillor or a Trader or as both. He felt Will Rayner should stand as a Trader alone.

Duncan McCanlis replied that he and Will Rayner had been asked to form the PHSSG as Councillors. Rachael White said she would be representing the Churchgate Gallery and Will Rayner would be on the PHSSG as a Councillor.

Lesley Thornton confirmed the Traders who had contacted her as Administrator or at this meeting, who wished to be nominated to join the PHSSG as Bramdowns, Churchgate Gallery, The Big Cheese, Jana Henrie, Melody Art & The Bagatelle.

**i. FIRST PPC COUNCILLOR NOMINATION**

Duncan McCanlis nominates Will Rayner as a PPC Councillor on the PHSSG, seconded by Jane Dyer, and unanimously agreed

**ii. SECOND PPC COUNCILLOR NOMINATION**

Will Rayner nominates Duncan McCanlis as a PPC Councillor on the PHSSG, seconded by Stuart Weaver, and unanimously agreed

**iii. THIRD PPC COUNCILLOR NOMINATION**

There were no further nominations

**iv. FIRST TRADER NOMINATION**

Duncan McCanlis nominates Bramdowns, seconded by Jane Dyer, and unanimously agreed

**v. SECOND TRADER NOMINATION**

Jane Dyer nominates Churchgate Gallery, seconded by Stuart Weaver, and unanimously agreed

**vi. THIRD TRADER NOMINATION**

Rachael White nominates The Big Cheese, seconded by Melody Hawtin, and unanimously agreed

**vii. FOURTH TRADER NOMINATION**

Rachael White nominates Jana Henrie, seconded by Duncan McCanlis, and unanimously agreed

**viii. FIFTH TRADER NOMINATION**

Jane Dyer nominates Melody Art, seconded by Rachael White, and unanimously agreed

Rachael White asked if there could be a sixth Trader added to allow The Bagatelle to be elected. There were no objections.

**ix. SIXTH TRADER NOMINATION**

Rachael White nominates The Bagatelle, seconded by Jane Dyer, and unanimously agreed

Andy Milne asked if The Churchgate Gallery now has two votes on the PHSSG and if this breaks our rules. Jane Dyer suggests just one vote between them, Lesley Thornton and David Hawtin agree. Lesley Thornton added that the PHSSG meetings will be open to all and she would still like Rachael to be involved as she has a lot of experience as a Trader to offer, lots of ideas and energy.

Rachael White offers to stand down and Andy Milne is asked for his response. He answers that this is not his concern but is a presentational problem for the PHSSG perhaps. Deborah Stanyon agreed with Andy Milne and was also concerned how it would be perceived.

Jane Dyer comments that Lisa Redston said who is a Member can change throughout the life of the Fund and Duncan McCanlis suggested this should be discussed and decided at the next meeting of the PHSSG.

Richard Maw now said he would like to put himself forward as the third PPC Councillor on the PHSSG, saying that it was a body that he thought had been formed slightly under duress and that he was not overly keen on the situation under which it had been formed. But now that the Group has some legitimacy and was now creating a proper way forward to look at how the money could be spent, he felt it was not unreasonable for another PPC Councillor to step forward and join the Group. He said he would prefer to do that unless his other colleagues wished to join instead of him.

Melody Hawtin asked why Andy Milne was not standing and Duncan McCanlis asked if he would like to answer that question. Andy Milne replied that he was not standing, and to go through the process now would be raking over old coals and not be helpful for the group in the future.

Duncan McCanlis asked if anyone would like to propose Richard Maw. As no one proposed his nomination, Duncan McCanlis suggested his interest to join the group should be discussed at the next PHSSG meeting and asked for this to be added to the next Agenda.

## **7. DISCUSSION, NOMINATION AND VOTE TO ELECT A CHAIR OF THE PHSSG FROM THE ELECTED MEMBERS**

Duncan McCanlis asked Lesley Thornton, as the Administrator, to take over this item.

Lesley Thornton asked if there were any proposals for Chair from the people elected to PHSSG.

Rachael White offered to stand down for this Agenda Item. This offer was accepted so Rachael did not take part in the discussion, proposal or vote, ensuring that Churchgate Gallery only had one vote.

Will Rayner proposed Duncan McCanlis. Lesley Thornton asked if anyone would like to second the proposal or if the Group would like to discuss and propose anyone else.

Duncan McCanlis said he would welcome further discussion adding the SW&T guidance clarified that the Chair could be a Trader and that the Chair does not have to be a PPC Councillor. He added that he would be very happy to take on the task if that was what the Group wanted.

Lesley Thornton said she was not seeing anyone wanting to nominate anyone else, adding that she felt Duncan McCanlis would make an excellent Chair as he had already shown that he was very even handed and was a good listener, which was what was needed going forward.

***Will Rayner proposed to elect Duncan McCanlis as Chair of the PHSSG, Seconded by Jane Dyer and unanimously agreed.***

## **8. TO DISCUSS DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE DISTRIBUTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

Will Rayner and Lesley Thornton explained that they had started on a draft questionnaire and Lesley Thornton went through some of the ideas included, explaining that there could be a covering letter explaining that the PHSSG would like to gather information about how Traders operate, such as their opening hours, whether they would open for special events, the problems they face and other information that could help the PHSSG understand how they might be best helped. There would then be a questionnaire sent to Traders to gather this information and we could include a further questionnaire regarding the proposed Traders Organisation. Finally, there would be a questionnaire for everyone, Traders and residents, that could include the ideas originally put forward from the previous group's questionnaire. It was hoped this could be made available to residents in the shops that are open and that the PVTA could email this to their mailing list.

Jane Dyer suggested the fact finding should include things that are a problem for Traders like the toilets, car parking and signage.

Lesley Thornton suggested the format of the questionnaire should be decided by the PHSSG by the weekend to go out next week (beginning 1<sup>st</sup> February) and offered to provide statistical analysis of the data returned to help the PHSSG. Duncan McCanlis said this would be welcomed but they also wanted Blue Sky thinking.

Will Rayner commented that there was still a lot of uncertainty about the coming year and when things would open up after the Covid-19 lockdown. He recommended short term interventions and cautioned about making sure we could deliver the interventions within the timescale, but were also not too early in delivering others, adding there would be no point in having a fantastic flower display at Easter, for instance, if we were still in a lockdown and there were no visitors to see it.

**9. TO DISCUSS A PROPOSAL TO SET ASIDE A SMALL PART OF THE FUND TO COVER EXPENSES FOR PRINTING, PHONE CALLS, SOFTWARE, ETC.**

Duncan McCanlis suggested the PHSSG should agree to the proposal, especially as most of the work is currently voluntary. He asked for this to go on the next Agenda.

**10. TO DISCUSS THE FORMATION OF A TRADERS OF PORLOCK GROUP**

Duncan McCanlis asked Rachael White to talk about this as she has been the main driving force behind its creation. She briefly explained that it would be a forum for discussion between Porlock Traders and highlighted that Porlock does not currently have a Traders Group.

It was agreed to discuss this in more depth at the next PHSSG meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm