

## Porlock High Street Support Group

### MINUTES

HELD ON FRIDAY 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT 8.00 PM

Remote Virtual Meeting via Zoom

*The Meeting was digitally recorded and is available at*

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

**Group Members Present:** Cllr D McCanlis (Porlock Parish Council and PHSSG Chair)  
Cllr W Rayner (Porlock Parish Council)  
S Weaver (Porlock High Street Trader representing The Big Cheese)  
M & D Hawtin (Porlock High Street Trader representing Melody Art)  
D Thornton (Porlock High Street Trader representing The Bagatelle)  
R White (Porlock High Street Trader representing Churchgate Gallery)  
J Dyer (Porlock High Street Trader representing Jana Henrie)  
A Lovell & T Davies (Porlock High Street Traders representing Bramdowns)  
L Thornton (PHSSG Administrator and Minute Taker)

**Members of the public present:**

David & Sylvia Hancock  
Sarah Shorten  
Pauline  
Anne Looney

**1. APOLOGIES**

All Members in attendance.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST DISPENSATION**

No declarations made.

**3. TO RECEIVE ANY COMMUNICATION OR ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

Duncan McCanlis explained that we had been handed quite a responsibility to decide how to spend this Fund which amounted to more than a third of the total budget Porlock Parish Council normally receives in a year, adding that many eyes would be on us, indicated by the number of responses to the questionnaire received, scrutinising what we decide and do. He felt that this was an historic moment for Porlock and congratulated everyone for all the work already done in getting such a terrific response at the consultation stage.

Duncan emphasised the grant criteria, to create a legacy for the Village and also improve our sustainability and resilience. He added that we must work efficiently, referring to the principles for

how we might work together, with humility, by listening to each other, and focusing on the answer that we are trying to achieve.

Duncan McCanlis restated the aims of the Fund: to deliver short term interventions to support High Street businesses to be adaptable, resilient and grow back stronger, to promote a clean, attractive, vibrant High Street with the aim of attracting visitors and shoppers. He added that the management and handling costs needed to support that can be part of the plan. Duncan explained that the criteria of Climate change and Sustainability needed to be kept in mind when delivering the aims.

Duncan McCanlis stated that the purpose of this meeting was to decide on the broad aims and that the detail and how to incorporate that into the delivery would follow once the project groups were arranged.

Duncan McCanlis then handed over to Lesley Thornton to report on the responses to the questionnaire and the added comments and ideas that had been received.

Lesley Thornton explained that she had to date received 84 returned questionnaires, adding that she had recorded all the results rating the 8 initiatives for High Street Traders, Businesses elsewhere, Residents and Other (includes unticked/unspecified) and shared her screen to show the raw data and the two graphs. The first graph showed all the results totalled together for each of the 8 initiatives, explaining that 5 initiatives were rated overall as very important or extremely important: Appearance of the High Street, Outdoor seating, Promotion, Signage and Events/Activities, with Appearance coming out on top.

A second graph showing a comparison of the results between High Street Traders, Residents, and Businesses elsewhere/others combined was then displayed. Lesley Thornton discussed the variations highlighting that the Matched funding for Shop-front renovation initiative was less important to High Street Traders than it was for Residents. She suggested, from the comments made, that Residents may have related this to the general appearance of the High Street, and that, perhaps, Traders were less interested in the matched funding element. She also mentioned that Signage was the most important initiative for Traders.

Lesley Thornton then read through a report based on all the comments received.

For a transcript and to view the data, graphs and observations made, please refer to the pdf document 'Summary of results 19.2.21' available at [www.porlockparishcouncil.org/phssg/](http://www.porlockparishcouncil.org/phssg/)

#### **4. TO APPROVE THE DRAFT MINUTES 09.02.21**

Duncan McCanlis asked if everyone had read the minutes and if there were any questions or suggested changes.

***Rachael White proposed that the draft minutes 09.02.21 are approved, Seconded by Jane Dyer, unanimously agreed.***

## 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Duncan McCanlis noted that four Members of the Public were attending the meeting. He invited them to speak.

Sarah Shorten explained that she lives at Bossington and is the artistic director of Stacked Wonky which is about to take over the Living unit on the High Street as their office, their design space, and where anyone from the Village or further afield can come in and talk, to get a better understanding of what they do and how they are contributing to the West Somerset economy.

Pauline explained she was an interested resident who lives in The Meadows.

Anne Looney explained she was just here as an interested resident.

David Hancock was having technical difficulties so was unable to speak.

Duncan McCanlis thanked them for attending and confirmed they may contribute throughout the meeting if they wanted.

**Items 6 and 7 on the Agenda were then effectively discussed together as one.**

## 6. TO DISCUSS CIRCULATED QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS AND IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT THEMES

## 7. TO DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON BROAD THEMES FOR THE INITIAL PLAN AND ASSIGN TWO OR THREE PEOPLE TO EACH PROJECT

Duncan McCanlis explained that there should be three main areas of discussion:

1. To discuss the report on the questionnaires that Lesley Thornton read out.
2. To decide on the Broad Themes.
3. To decide how much each Broad Theme should be funded by in Agenda Item 8.

Lesley Thornton shared her screen to display an example of a draft Indicative Plan emailed earlier to the Group so they could see what the finished Plan should look like, i.e., the columns and boxes that needed to be filled.

Stuart commented that the Appearance of the High Street was something that came through as very important and could be done quickly and relatively cheaply – small projects creating a larger whole.

Will Rayner suggested Porlock needed a wow factor, to make Porlock look impressive. He also questioned the matched funding for High Street renovation as that could amount to £10,000 (40% of the budget) and that was the least important category for High Street Traders.

David Hawtin questioned if we needed to add more categories from ideas put forward in the questionnaires. It was generally felt these ideas were the detail that would be discussed within the broad themes once those were agreed.

Lesley Thornton suggested that the matched funding idea did not seem to fit the SW&T guidelines which state that money can not be given to specific businesses on the High Street. She explained it had been included on the questionnaire as had been a significantly funded Intervention on the

previous Indicative Plan but agreed that there had not been much enthusiasm for this from Traders. The residents were more in favour, but that may have been because they saw this as contributing to the overall appearance of the High Street. She suggested the matched funding could be scrapped and the appearance of shops go into the Appearance of the High Street category.

Rachael White suggested the shop fronts were not particularly bad. Tim and Anita, and Jane Dyer both explained they were in the process of improving theirs.

***David Thornton proposed to scrap shop-front renovation completely, Seconded by Jane Dyer, unanimously agreed.***

## 8. TO DISCUSS AND SET BUDGETS FOR THE BROAD THEMES ON THE INITIAL INDICATIVE PLAN

Duncan McCanlis referred to the example draft Indicative Plan (DIP) reiterating that budgets needed to be set for the categories but these would not be set in stone and money could be moved from one to another as the projects progressed.

Sarah Shorten asked if the Group intended doing all the broad themes or just one, or 2 or 3?

Sarah offered her help and Lesley Thornton confirmed that the Group fully intended and needed to involve other local people and organisations to help the Group deliver the fund.

Duncan McCanlis stated that the chart of results shows that all are important. He added that we needed a budget for administration and to employ an Administrator. He explained that the previous figures for this suggested 6 hours a week at £11 per hour, adding that he had discussed this with Lesley Thornton who had suggested no more than 5 hours a week should be spent on Administration and any more hours required would be voluntary. He explained that the cost of employing an Administrator would then be £2,200, suggesting a further £800 to cover costs of equipment, software, etc.

Duncan McCanlis also suggested a contingency fund of £2,000 in case any project needed more money than budgeted. It was generally felt, however, that the contingency fund was not needed as money could be moved between budgets.

Duncan McCanlis asked if the Group was happy to employ Lesley Thornton to continue as Administrator.

***Duncan McCanlis proposed to employ Lesley Thornton as Administrator for 5 hours a week at £11 per hour and to set the Admin budget at £3,000, Seconded by Rachael White, unanimously agreed.***

After some discussion it was decided to amalgamate initiatives 1. Appearance of the High Street and 2. Functionality of the High Street, and that the next budget that might be set was the Traders Group as potentially a smaller budget.

Will Rayner asked how much it might cost to start up a website and provide hosting for, say, three years. Lesley Thornton advised that the costs she had previously emailed the Group were as little as £13 a year for the Traders of Porlock domain, and then, using a proprietary website provider and template like Weebly or Go Daddy, hosting from £4 a month for a very basic website to £18 a month

for a feature rich business website, adding that these costs did not, therefore, amount to huge sums if paid in advance for 3 years. Employing a website developer would increase them significantly but it was hoped there were skills available to make this a DIY project. Anita Lovell explained she had experience creating websites and offered to help.

***Will Rayner proposed to set the budget for the Traders Group at £1,000, Seconded by Stuart Weaver, unanimously agreed.***

Duncan McCanlis explained there was now £21,000 to allocate and asked if anyone had a proposal for the budget for Appearance and Functionality of the High Street. Will Rayner suggested £10,000, Stuart Weaver suggested £8,000 and David Thornton said he had pencilled in some figures and had put £2,000 for functionality and £7,000 for High Street appearance, thus £9,000 combined. This was seen as a happy medium.

Rachael White suggested that there should be far fewer broad themes by combining 4. Outdoor Seating Area, 6. Promotion & Publicity, 7. Signage and 8. Village Events & Activities, and then having those as sub-categories, effectively creating two broad themes, one with £9,000 as agreed, the other with the remaining £12,000.

Lesley Thornton explained that the example DIP used a template and there was no facility for sub-categories. She also added that it may be more difficult to get the DIP approved if it was presented in a different, non- standard way with no specific budget against 4 categories. Stuart Weaver added that he did not see how it helped to combine categories 4, 6, 7 and 8 and then, divide those back out as sub-categories. He reminded the Group that the main purpose tonight was to agree an initial draft Indicative Plan that would be easy for PPC and SW&T to approve.

After some discussion it was generally agreed to not set specific budgets for categories 4, 6, 7 and 8 until it was known the costs of providing these and that further research was needed before the breakdown of the £12,000 could be agreed. Lesley Thornton cautioned that this may make the DIP harder to approve for PPC and SW&T. She suggested dividing the £12,000 equally between the 4 categories in the knowledge that those budgets could be changed, if necessary, at a later date. This suggestion was rejected.

Duncan suggested the Group should amalgamate interventions 1 & 2 on the example draft Indicative Plan, remove 3, move 5 to the position before 9. Admin and leave 4, 6, 7 and 8 as individual interventions but with one overall budget of the remaining £12,000

***David Thornton proposed to amalgamate intervention 1. Appearance of the High Street and 2. Functionality and to set the budget for them combined at £9,000, and Duncan McCanlis added to set a budget of £12,000 for the remaining four categories, Seconded by Jane Dyer, unanimously agreed.***

Lesley Thornton was asked to create a draft Indicative Plan based on the decisions taken to be sent to all Members for them to comment on and finalise so it could be sent to PPC on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February for approval by email, if possible. Duncan advised that, if PPC needed to call a meeting to

discuss and approve, the process could take over a week. He felt SW&T would be able to give a decision quicker.

## **9. TO DISCUSS THE MARKETING PLAN**

David Hawtin felt it was too early to discuss this yet as needs to be turned into a structured plan. Will Rayner added that the Marketing Plan would depend on the budget and what we are going to market to whom and how, adding that we may have to do our own promotion if the Visitor Centre will not co-operate. He also felt marketing was time critical to extend the season.

Melody Hawtin suggested that everything is marketing so everyone needs to be involved. She suggested everyone should email the Administrator with ideas.

Duncan McCanlis apologised that assigning two or three people to each project had been forgotten in Item 7. Melody Hawtin suggested that people could email into the Administrator and Lesley could select people for projects, to form teams and co-opt others.

Rachael White asked if, once the project teams were formed, they could have informal meetings within these smaller groups. It was confirmed that project teams would work this way and then feed back to full meetings at regular intervals to discuss ideas, proposals, budgets, etc. with the rest of the PHSSG. Lesley Thornton added that any decision requiring a vote must be done at a formal meeting to be publicised as required by PPC Standing Orders and fully minuted. Zoom meetings should always be recorded even if informal meetings are not published.

## **10. TO DISCUSS ADMINISTRATION COST INCLUDING EMPLOYING AN ADMINISTRATOR**

This had already been agreed in Item 8.

## **11. Date of next meeting**

Duncan McCanlis asked if everyone was happy to comment on and approve the changes to the draft Indicative Plan over the weekend by emailing the Administrator.

It was agreed to hold another Zoom meeting in a week's time, on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February at 8pm.

Duncan McCanlis asked for 'Choosing groups' to be added to the Agenda.

Sarah Shorten offered her help and suggested we put her wherever she could be best employed. Lesley Thornton offered to bring her up to date.

Will Rayner mentioned that David Hancock wanted to offer his help and had lots of good ideas and suggestions. Lesley Thornton asked David to email her his plans and documentation so they could be distributed.

The meeting ended at 9.38pm