



# Congleton Town Council

Historic Market Town

Chief Officer: **David McGifford CILCA**

## Business Support Working Group

### Minutes

1<sup>st</sup> October 2020, 2pm, Virtual Meeting

1. **Apologies:** None
2. **Guest Frank Hildrup- Traffic calming measures for Congleton:** Frank presented proposals on his ideas for potential traffic calming measures in Congleton. FH was advised that this should be picked up with the Integrated Transport working group and was pointed towards a Cheshire East public consultation that is proposed to be in the public domain from November 2020 onwards.
3. **Approve minutes from last meeting 13.08.20:** Approved.
4. **Actions from the last meeting 13.08.20:** Local childcare providers have been emailed a small questionnaire to ask how they feel supported and asked to comment on how they can be helped. KW is liaising with Cheshire East and Macclesfield College on how we can increase the supply, training and support of this sector.
5. **Town Centre Christmas Plans:**
  - **Shop Trees:** The Christmas team agreed that with there being no event this year that the budget usually spent on the stage and entertainment will be used to provide the small trees for above the shops that have previously supported this initiative or are new to Congleton this year. Usually around 100 trees will go up above shops in the Town Centre after the Remembrance dates.
  - **Town Centre Lights:** Officers are looking to enhance the lights that have been in the Town Centre for the past 7 years. The lights proposal will go to a full Council meeting on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October. UPDATE: this was agreed at the full Council meeting, lights have been ordered and should be erected after the Remembrance dates.
  - **Town Hall Lights:** A design has been sent from a lighting company to decorate the front of the Town Hall. This decision will be made at the next Town Hall, Assets & Services committee meeting: Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October.
  - **Tree of Light:** Congleton Rotary will be planting a tree in the Community Garden for this to be their tree to decorate each year for the Tree of Light event. Due to the current situation, this project is still going ahead, in that, public can buy the stars to be placed on the tree. The 'lighting of the tree' event is yet to be confirmed.
  - **Window Dressing:** Many Town Centre businesses are interested in decorating their windows for Christmas. The windows will be judged and all will receive a certificate, with prizes for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, as in previous years. NB: some shops are also decorating for Halloween.
  - **Christmas Trail:** To be discussed with the traders group, but potential to have a Christmas shops treasure hunt, aimed at children, if enough businesses are interested.
  - **Festoon Lighting:** As discussed in previous meetings, currently getting quotes for festoon lighting to be erected in the New Year, replacing the zig zag of lights in the pedestrian area for Christmas.



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6. **Post Office Update:** SF has been investigating the potential provision of a Town Centre post office and there is no easy answer. SF has looked into; outreach and mobile services, having the library as a potential location or possibly the Citizens Advice Bureau. SF will keep searching for ideas and reported that if it's a service that is needed, it would cost us money and so suggests to consult Congleton residents to see if it is something that is needed, as could increase the precept. The Post Office might not fund, as for Congleton we do already have two post offices (West Heath McColls & Hightown).  
\*\* Noted that Hightown would benefit from 'social distancing' pavement stickers, ACTION MH to contact Highways.
7. **BBC Update:** No official update from the group, they have not met since August. Noted that:
  - Some traders are interested in taking part in the Totally Locally October Fiver Fest, 10<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> October. UPDATE: 12 local businesses are currently taking part in this.
  - Late Night Shopping: Some of the Town Centre businesses tried staying open later on Thursday evenings until 8pm, this lasted a couple of weeks and felt this wasn't well supported or attended and has stopped for the time being.
  - JMac is working with local publishers Beartown Voice to put together a Town Guide, to be distributed before the end of the year.
  - Bearmania: The traders marketing group led by Dawn Gibbons is looking to set up a Community Interest Company to make Bearmania 2 happen, starting March 2021. This group would also like to see shop banners happen for the pedestrian area.
  - Suggested to help promote shops to have a 'Shop of the week' to highlight what they offer and any offers they have on, for this to be changed weekly to show off the great businesses across Congleton. To be discussed how we can do this, as the Council shouldn't be seen to favour one business over another. ACTION DMcG, RC & MH to meet.
8. **Business Support Survey Results:** 46 businesses in total answered this questionnaire.
  - 80% currently trading
  - Most were mainly affected by COVID-19 through forced closure.
  - Most were concerned about staff retention, carrying on to pay staff, rent and bills and many said that they would struggle with a second lockdown, especially if no more grants are available.
  - 65% applied for the Small Business Grant, 25% for the Job Retention Scheme, 27% for the Self Employment Support Scheme, amongst others. 53% of these grants have helped businesses to continue trading, though at a lower capacity.
9. **AOB:**
  - Reported that 118 reduced speed schemes across Cheshire East and none for Congleton. RD has written to the Chronicle about this and spoken to traders. ACTION RC to pick up this issue with Cllr Akers Smith.
  - Reported that four temporary pavement licenses have been applied for in Cheshire East, none in Congleton.
10. **Date of next meeting:** Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November, time TBC