

County Councillors Report June/July 2020

Agenda item - Recycling Project

For Cllrs information, The Executive Board Member is in touch with the group that were thinking of applying for funding to recycle items from Whitland HWRC that are to be thrown away. Basically CCC are applying for this fund on behalf of Carmarthenshire and will roll it out to all areas in due course.

Covid

www.covid19.joinzoe.com

So far they have identified, using this app, that loss of smell is one of the very early symptoms for a significant 60% of people. Latest research indicates certain rashes are significant so I still urge using this app to help identify very early outbreaks.

Resident Issues

There are a number of people waiting for housing at St David`s Avenue and a couple elsewhere in Whitland. I have suggested to CCC that a small number more be built and /or purchased within the community with affordable housing contributions. We have a handful of additional houses *pepper potted* about the town. There is a problem at the Westover site and CCC are investigating. A planning issue was raised about an unauthorised development in the town central area. I checked the detail of the infringement to confirm it was non-compliance and the complainant was invited to contact the enforcement officer directly but has not done so to date. Covid support for shopping and lifts continues. A reminder to CCC to repair a broken lamp seems to be resolved. The pavement outside the dental surgery is to be reinstalled by CCC over the position of the tree. Requested a street sweeping of the town centre and grass cutting , again, at St David`s avenue (sheltered housing complex). At St David`s avenue, magpies in the chimney stack and a cracked roof on the boiler room were reported last month and have been subject to a safety inspection with repairs to follow. A dropped kerb was requested by David Harries as there is one missing and Westover residents have to walk into the main road opposite the ATC headquarters. Whitland Week Chairman is interested in closing St John street for a Christmas event therefore I have asked for further information re timings and costs from CCC for street closure to ensure it is applied for in good time. Complaint of tree planting to be resolved between neighbours.

County Councillors Report June/July 2020

Buses

Following discussion with a concerned bus driver I requested (via a County Councillor colleague with friends in high places) that passengers wear compulsory masks although I quite understood and agreed with MD (First Minister) thinking on non-mask wearing generally. Technically it made sense. Further requested that free fares be reviewed since the subsidy system is wholly inadequate and disproportionately unfair to rural areas. Some responses are suggesting a West Wales service via County Councils being explored but I have some reservations with this model. There would be consultation with bus companies.

All Weather Pitch

Interest has been expressed in Whitland as a location for an indoor facility for sport in a central location so we will have to see what comes of this aspiration. Football and rugby are the principal sports mentioned.

CCC Five Year Strategic Plan

There is attached a DRAFT copy of the Carmarthenshire plan for general interest and there is also a five year capital programme although the two tend to differ somewhat. Some projects have been completed and in respect of schools the next bid to WAG for the MEP (modernising education programme) is likely to be in 2024 which will include Whitland schools. You will note the cycling aspirations and this ties in to Whitland and the Cardi Bach project although the funding will go to areas of high footfall first to encourage commuting. The Carmarthen to Llandeilo path is one project and the first phase is complete.

Ten Towns Generation Plan (CCC initiative to support the 10 market towns)

There is attached a copy of the DRAFT presentation from the consultants employed by CCC to undertake a review of the 10 market towns in Carmarthenshire with a view to regeneration. Some of you may not have seen this but the figures for Whitland do look promising compared to other towns. So far we only have this desktop exercise power point presentation given out just before COVID. As to funding projects they have identified a small amount left in the LEADER budget (European money). Unfortunately this for revenue only and the consultants and CCC are in discussion with WAG to find out what it can be used for.

County Councillors Report June/July 2020

Dairy Site

New business interest in a larger unit but this does not utilise the whole unit so owner seeking other tandem business to fill the unit. I have passed on contact details of one I am aware of.

Agenda item – Benches

As to the additional benches issue in general we now have firm dates from WAG for reopening outdoors and indoors which was not the case at the time of my urgent request for additional town benches nevertheless it does not change the concept which is still essential support. Although I had heard the BBC news about the spacing problems within the hospitality industry it did not sink home until I was asked about seating on the streets by a very obvious small capacity business. Immediately I understood why a certain hostelry had placed benches on the pavement and why a week later they were gone and what the technical / legal problems were. Based on the new signage it was clear CCC had been around the Town checking social distancing, advising and marking on pavements. This press release from Castell Howell compounded my thinking and I immediately asked WTC Cllrs to help asap using the powers only a Town or Community Council holds.

"We are unable to confirm how many jobs could be lost, as this depends on the extent to which our customers are able to resume trading while operating within social distancing rules."

I had not measured pavements myself so suggested the Train Station area and Grosvenor to suit the observations and my thinking as above. Nothing to do with favouritism. In line with Cllrs feedback there are also additional locations to consider. There is a licensing process for street café /café culture seating and a business can apply for this but it takes at minimum of two months for the process and TCCs are consulted as part of the process. This is too long for the hospitality business even if the licensing committee had been meeting. TCCs are the only ones that can act immediately.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink-news/cardiff-castle-street-plans-seating-18592886>

6 days ago Cardiff Council announced it is going to help business by closing one of its busiest streets and providing additional seating as only a council can. This will help over the remaining summer weeks to support cafes/pubs.



County Councillors Report June/July 2020

An announcement by the deputy minister

“ During a visit to Rhyl, Hannah Blythyn said the £5.3 million repurposed capital funding from the Transforming Towns programme, will be used to fund adaptations in town centres to facilitate trading and public safety in response to coronavirus. This will include but not limited to; outdoor awnings, outdoor tables and chairs, outdoor heating, outdoor screening, bollards, planters, small green infrastructure schemes, electricity supply and lighting to outdoor trading spaces and the temporary use of vacant buildings and the establishment of local markets. “

The Transforming Towns programme is a 90 million pot but I do not think this includes Whitland based on the summary of allocations although there may be a CCC strategic approach which will benefit the smaller 10 Towns one day.

COVID

It is within the hands of the WTC to promote and facilitate distancing locally whilst helping to retain hospitality business as near to full operating potential as possible.

County Council Chairman

The Chairman, Cllr Ieuan Davies, will attend Parc Dr Owen on 31st July to plant a tree. It is his very first non-virtual event so an honour to have him in Whitland.