

Meeting of Pembroke Dock Town Centre Regeneration

Held on Tuesday 10th September 2013 at the Pater Hall

Present; Martin White, Cllr David Pugh, Cllr Sue Perkins, Christine Gwyther, Phil Gwyther, Maureen Colgan, Abigail Hallett, David Davies, Ann Dureau, Pam George, Jane Phillips, Veronica Roach, Francis Parry, Alison Lee, Sian Cremin, Doug King, James Parfitt, Stephanie Cross, Berry Davies, Phil McFadden, Andrew McNaughton, Miranda Rhys- Davies, Wendy O'Driscoll, Margot Brown, Jeanette Jacobs, Carolyn Cox, John Evans, Margaret Brown, Betty Parsons, Jo Brookman Lloyd, Margaret Murton, Jane McNaughton, Dennis Hall, Peter Kraus, Amy Jones, David James, Don Earl, Lee Griffiths

The Meeting was opened by Cllr Sue Perkins who introduced the County Council representatives Martin White Head of Regeneration and Cllr David Pugh Cabinet Member for Regeneration.

Pembrokeshire County Council introduction

Cllr Pugh informed members of the meeting that there were a number of towns within Pembrokeshire which have been suffering and need regeneration; he commented that if's and whys had been discussed but the progress of regeneration now needed the Towns to take ownership of plans to drive forward. He commented that positive thinking was required and that a town team should be formed to drive and progress ideas.

Martin White commented that Pembroke Dock had benefited from a lot of external funding recently from the THI (Townscape Heritage Initiative) and commercial property grants. He stated that the County Council had recently offered to Town Centres a paint scheme which was funded from a capital programme with £50,000 being allocated to this scheme, Martin White informed members that this scheme had now been fully allocated and there would not be any more allocation until next year.

Martin White stated that the community needed to lead on improvements and represent themselves and that plans would be required to move forward with the external funders to ensure that the funding can be approved.

Community proposals

Abaigail Hallett informed members that she had been looking at opening a Spirit of Enterprise business in the Old spar store, she commented that she had come across problems with funding the renovation of the building, it was stated that she would need to speak with the County Council regarding these issues to see if they can help. Miranda Rhys Davies commented that she currently had the key for the old spar store to erect artwork in the window.

David James from the Heritage Society questioned if the boatyard in Front Street could be developed, he commented it could compliment the Sunderland Trust and the group would like to open a heritage centre and provide further information on the restoration and repair of boats. Cllr Sue Perkins informed David James that unfortunately funding for this sort of project could not come from the Town Centre Regeneration fund.

James Parfitt questioned if the Town could have either a fortnightly or monthly market held in the Town Centre, he stated that we need to encourage more use of the shops. He stated that there is a current lack of signage signposting free car parking areas and the Town Centre, and signage was something which should be looked at. He commented that St Govans Centre was an area which needed attention to tidy the area, and maybe even look at changing the entrance on Lower Meyrick Street to make it a two way entrance off route 9, Martin White commented that the town team could meet with the Director of transportation to discuss issues like this at a later date.

Lee Griffiths commented that he works for the Big Local App and his business runs on Wi-Fi in the area, he commented that the group need to be pulling the youngsters in with different events grabbing their attention. He commented that events like the Ironman raise the profile of the town and its key to the growth of the area. He stated that the Red bull go karts look for areas with hills and Pembroke Dock is surrounded by them he commented that something like this would bring visitors to the area, and also would be the ideal event for the Children from the schools to take part and use the bridge innovation centre to widen their skills and experience.

Martin White commented that new events could be part funded for the town but an event strategy would be needed.

Ann Dureau questioned if business rates could be lowered or if there was a way of assisting businesses with the rates?

Councillor David Pugh commented that the County Council does not set the business rate they only collect them on behalf of the Welsh Government, he stated that they did need reviewing but commented that this was something that would not be looked at until 2017.

Martin White stated that there was the enterprise zone that did assist 18 businesses last year with rates relief; he stated that the business needed to be growing or expanding to fit the criteria.

Dennis Hall commented that the rates relief process is good at present, but stated that the rents of some of the properties was very high and questioned if anything could be done about this and if other larger chain organisations could be contacted to inform them of the empty properties within the town

Councillor David Pugh commented that the County Council do approach companies to highlight the empty properties within the town, he stated that the Town Council could act as a pressure group with regards to the rental of properties by writing to the owners to state that the rental is too high and highlight any interested individuals who would be willing to pay less.

John Evans commented that Pembroke Dock needed to make the most of what it had, he stated that the recent Battle of Atlantic weekend held by the Sunderland Trust brought a lot of people into the town. He commented that the bollards within the town needed repainting and the cobbles needed looking at as they are currently causing issues to pedestrians.

Peter Kraus stated that the railway line between St Govans Centre and Parfitts was an area which constantly needed clearing, it was stated that the area was private land so there was not much which could be done, it was commented that areas like this within the Town Centre should use the name and shame process to try and get some action. It was stated that the Railway tracks are a part of the heritage of Pembroke Dock and it was suggested that Pembroke Dock Town Council should own the land. Councillor S Perkins stated that external funding would be required for this type of project. It was questioned if there could be a tram introduced from the railway station to the ferry terminal which went along the old railway line.

Pam George commented that Pembroke Dock Town Council have tried over a number of years to build a relationship with Irish Ferries but failed. She stated that she felt that a good relationship with Irish Ferries would be something which would benefit the town; other members of the meeting agreed and commented that this was something the Town Team should progress.

It was agreed that a Town Team would be formed and would meet within the next week to discuss the proposals which were highlighted.