

REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL - AUGUST 2020

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS - AUGUST 2020

10th July. I was interviewed by BBC Somerset Sound via telephone regarding the town council's imminent acquisition of the new allotments at Longforth Farm. The piece was broadcast at 0700 on Sunday 12th July when I was invited to be interviewed live on air. Needless to say I declined that invitation therefore the interview was recorded on the previous Friday.

The good news for the town council regarding this is Alan Cavill, the National Allotments representative for the south west, who normally judges our annual allotments competition, did tune in at 0700 and heard the interview. The outcome of this is, he has offered his and an architect friend used to dealing with allotments, help and skills to enable us to design the allotments to the best advantage without charge!!!

14th July. I and other town and district councillors took part in a Zoom meeting with the SWAT planning assistant director and other officers to get an update on the progress of the work on the Wellington railway station. We weren't told much more than we already knew as they stated that the work was still confidential.

15th July at 10.00. I along with the other north ward town councillors, took part in a virtual meeting with the CEO of Swallowfield, Mathew Gazzard, to discuss the projected redundancies at the company. He was very frank when explaining the rationale behind the company's decision but also informed us that the Wellington site remains the main headquarters for the company's European business.

15th July at 11.30. The same party then decamped to Relyon for a similar meeting with Alan Chapman the MD. Again a very frank discussion took place and Alan was very open with us. He was hoping to have resolved the company's position in a positive way by the end of July but we have heard nothing yet.

15th July at 3.30. I was interviewed at some length by ITV West regarding the town and how it was recovering from the affects of Covid 19. Although I was very positive and mentioned many positive aspects of our town, including the success of our Pop-Up Shop, all the interviewer wanted to focus on were the redundancies that have been announced and my air time was very short.

21st July. I chaired a Wellington Webinar arranged by the district council to address revitalising the high street and its shops, which comes under the banner of the Safer High Street Fund, more on this later in my report. Unfortunately, there was only one Wellington business represented and that person could not stay for the whole meeting.

EMERGENCY TOWN CENTRE FUND

I wanted to bring councillors up-to-date on this initiative that has been launched by national and local government. Councillors may have seen newspaper headlines stating that the town could benefit from £100,000 funding.

For the last four weeks, the Deputy Mayor and I have been joining a SWAT meeting on the Emergency Town Centre/Safer High Street Fund out of which the idea of the Webinars came. As I have said earlier in this report, only one Wellington business took part in the Webinar and this was very disappointing as we do not have representations from businesses in general apart from the business represented on the Town Centre Working Group.

SWAT has allocated £500,000 funding towards interventions to help relaunch the high streets as somewhere to shop with Taunton being allocated £200,000, Minehead £100,000 and Wellington £100,000 with smaller amounts of £25,000 going to places like Dulverton and Wiveliscombe.

SWAT wanted an indicative plan of possible actions by w/c 3rd August, costed and with timescales.

The issue that Wellington has, we do not have a business association who can take up this challenge and run with it. Taunton has a chamber of commerce and Minehead has a BID organisation. I have raised this issue at nearly every meeting as this has resource implications for Wellington and the town council if we are expected to manage this funding. We do, however, have the Town Centre Working Group which I have engaged in the process to look at possible interventions that Wellington could deliver.

Due to time constraints and the ability to meet, I asked the members of the Town Centre Working Group to email their ideas for boosting the high street which they duly did and I thank them for that.

SWAT are drawing up legal agreements with the parties involved in this initiative but I need to have further discussions with the Town Clerk regarding our ability to manage this initiative, if we can and also there will be an agenda item on this subject at the September town council meeting.

Janet

Janet Lloyd
Mayor
2nd August 2020