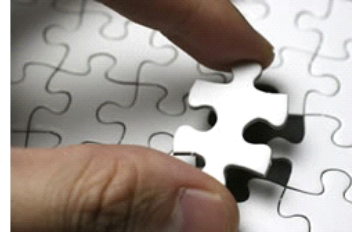


Eccleshall

Business Focus Group

Bringing Businesses and Community Together



Minutes of the meeting held on 30th September at The George

Present: Gabrielle Hadley, Nick Evans, Alison Stothard, James du Pavey, Caroline Law, Mark Law, Tim Hulse (Treasurer), Val Wilson, Steve Wilson, Roger Williams, Bessie Smith, Bernie Priekulis, Sandra Wood (for Katherine House), Gary Lawrence, Pat Freshwater, Dudley Freshwater, Kevin Reynolds, Peter Bevan, Peter Jones (Chair) and Amanda Graham (Secretary)

Apologies: Christine & Quentin Smith, David Spencer, Karl & Sarah Lehmann, Becky Davies, Tim West, Nicole Heath, Richard Starkey and Nicola Battle.

- 1) Minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and there were no matters arising.
- 2) Peter Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting, and everyone present introduced themselves and their business.
- 3) Gabrielle gave a report on the membership. There are currently 48 members, and since there were 23 members a year ago the membership has more than doubled.
- 4) Tim Hulse gave a treasurer's report, saying we have just over £2,000 in the bank.
- 5) Tim then gave a presentation on the proposed changes to the Focus Group. He asked what people want from an organisation such as ours. People have various reasons for joining, but one thing that such an organisation can offer is strength in numbers – a business focus group can get things done which a small business on its own couldn't possibly do. He used the example of bringing broadband to Eccleshall, which was one of the early campaigns of the Focus Group.

His suggestion, supported by the executive committee, is to produce an electronic newsletter to target businesses in Eccleshall, and ultimately, householders. He used a pyramid as an illustration, with the executive committee and the active members at the top, then a tranche of businesses who have joined the focus group but don't play an active part in it, then some 300 businesses who have shown no interest in the Focus Group, and at the bottom some 5,000 households. The initial newsletter would target the businesses which are already in our database, and hopefully we should soon build up a database of household so that we can target them.

Tim also put forward his suggestion for the format of the meetings, which is to have plenty of time at the beginning and end of each meeting to socialise and 'network'; and that the more formal part of the meeting would probably have two short talks, one maybe an 'advertorial' talk from a member, another, on something which should be of interest to all members, e.g. some aspect of law or tax.

The newsletter has already been taken one stage further in that an editorial team for the business has been set up consisting of Tim, Gabrielle, Nick Evans and Caroline Law.

After some questions about the newsletter and the database the proposal was accepted on a show of hands.

- 6) Nick then gave a presentation on the proposed newsletter. The ultimate aim is to have two newsletters, one going to businesses and one to households. He emphasised the importance

keeping the database secure and not breaching the Data Protection Act – if it went wrong he could go to prison!

The point of the newsletter is to

- Link in all businesses
- Keep business local
- Present an opportunity for advertising
- Present Eccleshall as dynamic

There will be an editorial team who will target members for copy, and a production team who will put it all together and test it. The third component necessary is subscribers. There is already a modest database of businesses in existence made up of current and former members, but for consumers we are going from a standing start. The idea is for members to pay £25 to submit an advertorial article. Only part of the article will be visible on the website, and to get the full story the subscriber will have to click through. It has to remain in electronic format because we don't have the budget to pay for printing and posting hard copies. The idea at present is to produce it every other month.

There was some discussion about the newsletter, and several people came up with ideas as to how to get consumers to subscribe.

Peter Jones asked if everyone was behind this project, and on a show of hands everyone was.

The consumer newsletter is being set up by Peter Jones, Tim Hulse, James du Pavey, Dudley Freshwater, and Becky Davies.

7) Gabrielle gave an update on the late night Christmas opening on Thursday 25th November. The brass band is booked plus Lonsdale school choir. Shops which will be opening late are Spencer's Jewellers, Little Monsters, Bethan Ward, Eclipse, Goody 2 Shoes, News Express, James Du Pavey, The Cabbage Patch, ExtraMile Communications, Krug, Moet, Pollyanna Patchwork, BB's Florist, Sean Hirst flowers, Sarah Willard Couture, Fletcher's garden centre, The Coffee Shop, Hairfree clinic and Beauty Salon, Perry's and Katharine House. The George will have Donna Louise Trust and the First Responders in their function room, and The Bell will be having turkey baps and mulled wine outside.

Advertising has already started in the Eccleshall Life and will continue in the local news. If anyone else plans on staying open late that evening, could they let Gabrielle Hadley know, so she can add them to the list and coordinate with them nearer the time.

8) The next meeting will be held on Thursday 4th November, venue to be arranged.

9) There was no other business.