



Business Networking Group Meeting Notes

Thursday 2nd July – 11.30am

Wem Town Council

Attendees: Bob Barker, Peter Broomhall, Lucy Gilchrist, Helen McCabe, Denise Morgan, , Edward Towers

Apologies: Penny O'Hagan

1. Introduction to the Business Networking Group

Background

- This group has evolved from the former Wem Economic Forum.
- We have not held any networking events for around a year, so this meeting is an opportunity to discuss whether there is still an appetite from businesses and what our role should be going forward.
- The aim is to support businesses across the whole parish, not just the High Street.

Discussion Points

- Is there still a need for a business networking group?
- What role should the councils play?
- Should we facilitate networking, provide training, promote businesses or simply act as a connector?

2. Summary of Previous Activities

Previous activities have included regular networking every three to four months, coffee mornings at the library, Digital Skills workshops, launch events with guest speakers and consultation events. These events were generally well attended but required considerable time and effort to organise.

Previous activities benefited from external funding. Neither council currently has

funding available, therefore future activities will need to be sponsored, delivered in partnership or provided at little or no cost.

3. Business Survey

The group agreed it was important to understand what businesses want before planning future activity.

The survey will seek views on:

- Networking opportunities
- Training requirements
- Business challenges
- Preferred communication methods
- Future support

It should include:

- High Street businesses
- Larger employers on the industrial estates
- Home-based businesses, cottage industries and artisan makers

Actions:

- Helen to update the survey.
- Produce both Google Forms and paper versions.
- Members to encourage businesses to complete it.

4. Businesses Working from Home

The importance of engaging home-based businesses was discussed. These businesses form an important part of the local economy but are often overlooked. The survey will help identify how best to engage them.

5. Training Opportunities

Future training should be based on survey results. Topics could include AI, digital marketing, social media, funding, business planning and Christmas marketing. Any training will need to be delivered through partnerships or sponsorship where possible.

6. Future Networking

Ideas included regular networking meetings, coffee mornings, guest speakers and practical workshops.

The group also discussed holding a daytime networking event before Christmas with

mince pies and practical advice to help businesses prepare for the festive trading period, similar to previous successful events.

7. Love Your High Street Week

The group discussed supporting Love Your High Street Week from 9 November by:

- Mayor visiting businesses.
- Distributing decorative hearts for shop windows.
- Positive PR and social media.
- Christmas networking event.
- Festive marketing tips for businesses.

8. Wem Harvest

Potential scope for expansion with proposed Love Lane produce fair at Millenium Green.

Actions:

- Lucy to figure out feedback.

9. Promotion and Communications

The importance of Wem Market in supporting the High Street was recognised.

Actions:

- Helen to write an article for The Wemian promoting the survey and asking businesses how the Forum can best support them.
- Helen to update the Wem Economic Forum logo.
- Helen to prepare motions for Wem Town Council (to Edward) and Wem Rural Parish Council supporting Love Your High Street Week.

Actions Agreed

- Helen to update the Business Survey.
- Helen to create Google Forms and paper versions.
- All members to distribute the survey.
- Helen to write an article for The Wemian.
- Helen to update the Forum logo.
- Helen to prepare motions for both councils.
- Explore sponsorship opportunities for future activities.