

**HALESWORTH BUSINESS CONNECTIONS
MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2010 AT 5.45 P.M.
AT THE OFFICES OF LOVEWELL BLAKE**

Present:	Brian Bale	Chair
	Doug Mizon	Treasurer
	Jack Clayton	
	Karen Knights	Secretary
	Eileen Heaps	
	Geoffrey Kiddy	
	David Ruddle	
	Colin Huggins	Town Centre Group
	Richard Woolnough	Town Centre Plan

BB welcomed Colin Huggins.

1. Apologies for Absence

Tim Heaps, Keith Wright, Maria Wright, Rachel Ducker

2. Minutes of Meeting held 13th January 2010

Agreed.

3. Matters arising not on Agenda

Minutes of meetings would now be placed on the website after allowing seven days for approval by Committee members.

9. Town Centre Plan

Richard Woolnough had been invited to attend the meeting to update HBC in relation to the Town Centre Plan. BB welcomed Richard who advised that the plan was now entering a “lively phase”. He advised that subject groups had been established to concentrate on specific issues. The proposed Tesco development was a big issue which attracted people to meetings. He felt that any decisions should be community led rather than developer led and observed that many people were anti Tesco. He advised that WDC had commissioned an independent retail assessment that concluded that the Tesco plan was too big and in the wrong place. Tesco will appeal and the matter will go to a public inquiry as will the Rainbow application which will also be opposed by WDC. Following the independent retail assessment WDC feel it important to develop the Town Centre area first and both the Tesco site and the Rainbow site are defined as edge of centre. The report commissioned by WDC identified a need for much less retail than that commissioned by Tesco. The WDC report felt that retail such as that provided by ALDI or LIDL would retain more expenditure in Halesworth. The Town Centre Working Group felt it important to look at supporting the markets and independent retailers as an alternative strategy to retaining expenditure in the Town. Sustainability, and local food was important but a lot of local people wanted a second supermarket to provide greater competition and more choice. Richard felt that it was important that all the people had a voice, not just those with strong

views. It was acknowledged that if a second supermarket came to the town centre the existing shops would “take a knock”. BB asked if RW knew when the public inquiry might take place. RW advised that no date had been set as yet but it was likely to be later in the year. It was acknowledged that Tesco own parts of the town centre site. The office audit concluded that there were not enough in the area and some were inaccessible. With this in mind any new development should include additional office space.

Discussions took place on various locations which might be suitable for re-development including the Station Yard, the Angel Link area and the middle school site. RW advised that future plans might include extending the pedestrian areas in the town to link The Thoroughfare and the Market Place.

Discussion took place on car parking charges and the adverse affect these had on attracting shoppers into the town. RW advised a meeting with WDC was due to take place to discuss this. It was felt unlikely that WDC would look favourably on removing car parking charges because it was an important source of income for them. It was noted that when the Tesco store opened in Beccles and offered free parking WDC were adversely affected.

Discussion took place on the train and bus services to the town as well as a proposed cycle way.

RW said it was important to get the right people around the table and BB commented that it was a step forward that WDC were prepared to talk. RW advised that a representative from WDC attended Town Centre Working Group meetings (TCWG) and was helping to create channels of communication.

JC thought that Halesworth had become an unbalanced community with more old people than young. The closure of the middle school could only make this situation worse. There is not enough affordable housing. The middle school site is “up for grabs” and it was important that secondary education was retained as a feature on this site. If this could not be attained then the site should be used by the community for sports and leisure because it would be difficult to use sites currently owned by Tesco for this purpose. He felt that some bold and innovative plans/decisions were needed so that the site stays within education.

Discussion took place on the industrial allocation in the Broadway Farm/Sparrowhawk Way area.

RW advised that there would be an article in the March Community News covering the main issues to raise awareness and gain feedback from the community. Following this an Action Plan would be written. This Action Plan will identify what needs to happen and will involve local villages.

EH felt there was a lack of meeting places in the area and that a centre for the community was important. The Rifle Hall is not big enough or suitable and The Cut has problems with parking. BB felt there would not be enough room on the Town Centre site for a community facility and that the school site would be better.

BB thanked RW for his report and RW said it was important to get people to attend a consultation meeting at the Rifle Hall on 26th/27th March. BB said it was a crucial time for the town and it was important to lead the decision making process and asked where the public inquiry would be held. RW advised that it is usually held in the town concerned and that anyone could speak at the meeting but should expect to be interrogated by the opposing QC. RW advised that the Town Plan Steering Group is closely aligned with the Town Council but is not controlled by them.

BB asked when the draft Action Plan would be completed and RW responded that it should be ready by June. It was hoped that the Town Council would monitor the Action Plan. RW was asked how much weight the Town Council had with WDC to ensure that plans moved forward. RW advised that it was hoped that a variety of groups would take ownership of certain aspects of the Action Plan.

JC felt that to address the issues raised earlier of too many older people in the town it would be necessary to build 1000 houses together with the facilities of required by the occupants including jobs. He had written a report based on the year 2075 when he felt that there should be 7,500 people living in Halesworth and the plan needed to accommodate this. BB said that the town needs to know now if the school site is to be offered to the community because until this decision is made nothing else can be planned. RW confirmed that the TCWG had the paperwork relating to the Vision Day held earlier in the year.

RW left the meeting @ 6.35 p.m.

4. Treasurer's Report

DM asked that KK be officially welcomed back to the committee. DM circulated his report and confirmed a £40 profit from the last breakfast. He also confirmed that HBC had paid for the TCG advertising and that the bank account is in the process of being changed.

5. Secretarial Items

The new constitution has been agreed by the committee and will now go forward to the AGM for approval.

Two new members were proposed and agreed. Rita at Merlin shoes has shown an interest in joining.

BB confirmed that he would be stepping down as Chairman at the AGM and asked if those present were prepared to continue in their current roles. All confirmed they were prepared to do so. It was agreed a separate membership secretary was needed. Further planning for the AGM would take place at the next meeting.

6. Town Centre Sub Group

CH advised that the group had met twice this year and around six retailers turn up regularly. A key issue was what was happening to the Halesworth at Christmas Group and discussion took place on whether to merge some or all of the sub groups. CH confirmed that Dudley was standing down and that KW

was no longer on this committee. JC advised he had not yet decided whether to stand down as Treasurer and this would depend on who took over from Dudley. A further meeting will take place on the 22nd February. At present there is no one who is prepared to take over Dudley's role but there are a number of people in the TCG who are prepared to take on the Christmas lights.

Discussion took place on the possibility of some groups distancing themselves from the HBC umbrella. BB advised that it was difficult to get retailers to join HBC and DM commented that sub groups under the umbrella of HBC benefitted from their access to funding. CH advised that no decision had yet been made and that he would put forward this point of view at the next meeting.

7. Events

EH reported that the January breakfast had been booked to capacity and that 34 people turned up. She advised that she had received an email from the speakers at that breakfast (Transitions) who wished to say thankyou and would like to run an Open Space evening. They asked if they could send out emails to HBC members and it was agreed that they should be advised to access email information from the website.

EH reported that the event planned for 24/2 at Reability was currently not being well supported. DM, advised that he would be there and that Gerald Burns would be attending, GK also advised that he would attend. EH felt that this could be a possible venue for future HBC events.

EH advised that she is having difficulty organising catering for the Breakfast Event on 31/3 at Hammonds. The quote tabled at the meeting was felt to have too much choice and BB advised he would give it some thought and get back to EH.

Future events were planned for the Wissett Plough in May, a Farm Walk in June and the Quiz in October. EH reported that the village hall at Wenhaston is unavailable.

8. Tourism Group

No report was available for this meeting but a meeting is to be held next Wednesday.

9/10. Town Plan and Tesco Update

Agenda items 9 and 10 are covered out of sequence following point 3 above.

11. Any Other Business

JC advised that the Christmas Lights event still had money in the bank. He felt that whoever takes on this role for 2010 should involve all of the community (schools, church groups, etc). If this event is run by the TCG it could be seen as an event only for the retailers.

JC offered to provide a copy of is 2075 Town Plan to members of the committee and BB thanked him and said he would be interested to read this document.

DM advised he had received an email from the Town Council advising him of a meeting on 8th March to discuss the latest Site Specific Allocations. It was agreed that DM should advise members of this meeting.

Date of next Meeting

10th March 2010

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.