

BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN OPEN MEETING HELD TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF A BUSINESS ASSOCIATION IN BIDDENDEN, HELD AT 7.30 PM ON TUESDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2014 IN THE VILLAGE HALL, BIDDENDEN

Cllr T Lupton - Chair of Parish Council
Mr Alan Reading – CMR (Speaker)
Mrs Alison Swannick – Clerk to the Parish Council

18 parishioners attended the meeting

1. **Chairman's Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated that the reason why the meeting was being held was that last year the village went through the process of putting together a new Community Led Plan. A large number of people were spoken to and a questionnaire sent to every household. The responses were analysed and one of the issues that came out of the exercise was a wish to form some sort of business association, something to strengthen business in Biddenden.

The 2011 census shows that Biddenden has just under 200 people who are either self-employed or sole traders; in addition the parish has approximately 50 businesses employing people.

Having identified the need, the Community Led Plan was presented to the Parish Council for adoption and there was a recommendation that the possibility of setting up a business association but with the caveat that BPC should act as a facilitator. The Parish Council was therefore facilitating discussion as to whether Biddenden wanted some sort of business association. The Parish Council is not the right body to set it up but it is able to facilitate.

The aim of the meeting was to discuss if there are parishioners who would like to move through to set up a "business association" which will mutually benefit everyone, working together, helping each other and sharing skills.

2. **Presentation by Mr Alan Reading, founder of several business associations**

Mr Reading introduced himself and gave details of his background describing how he had moved towards the setting up of the Lenham Valley and South Maidstone business associations and what was involved.

He explained how business associations could be useful to their members and the importance of networking. It was important to know who was in the room at a business association event that could be of use to you from a business point of view. At the associations that he is involved with there is a 20 minute presentation and a Q&A session. There is also a point where all those attending briefly state their name and what they do. It is about making sure you know who is in the room and listening to everybody else.

Directories of local businesses were also produced and delivered by members to households.

The Chairman thanked Mr Reading for his presentation and opened the floor to discussion.

3. Discussion

Discussion took place regarding the relevance of a business association to some of the High Street businesses.

The Chairman suggested that if there were people present who felt that a business association was not relevant to them then they may wish to leave the meeting so that those that did wish to pursue the idea could do so.

A parishioner stated that people did not know what they did and a business association would be useful.

Discussion took place that businesses needed to go out and get business and could not sit and wait for it to come to them. Networking was about building relationships and contacts. The person talking to you may not be able to use your business or services but someone they knew might.

A parishioner who did not have a business but had the idea of trying to get more coaches etc to stop in Biddenden was trying to put a booklet together. The idea was welcomed and it was suggested that Ashford Tourist Board might be able to help. The village is well positioned between towns and is a good selling point in itself.

Discussion took place about how to contact the 200 businesses in Biddenden. It was **agreed** that some research would be done by some of those present.

4. Next Steps

It was **agreed** that a meeting should be held by a smaller group to decide what they wanted from a business association. Someone was required to lead this forward. Emma Oliver offered to organise a meeting. The following people agreed to meet on Monday 10th March at The Bakehouse at 7.30 pm:

Emma Oliver
Caroline Oliver
Philippa Harris
David Boulding
Stephanie Boucher
Anna Foster
Anne Webster
Rona Ashton
Jonathan Sayer
Barbara Bridgeman

5. Close of meeting

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming. The meeting closed at 20:40

Alison Swannick - Parish Clerk

OPEN MEETING RE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

People indicating an interest in setting up a Business Association in Biddenden

| NAME |
|---|
| Rona Ashton |
| Julian Barnes <i>Didn't attend but unsure if could make it</i> |
| Anne Webster |
| Kate Whapham |
| Jonathan Sayer |
| Tom Lupton |
| Adrian Lidgett |
| Emma Oliver |
| Caroline Oliver |
| Sam Smith |
| S L Daniels |
| Brian Wingham |
| David Boulding |
| Alan Reading (Speaker) |
| Anna Foster |
| Barbara Bridgeman |
| Philippa Harris |