

CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Queen's Hall, High Street, Cuckfield, RH17 5EL



Item 13: Cuckfield High Street

Last week a meeting was held with 2 representatives of the High Street, Marie Dormer and Sam Heynes. Detailed below are the notes of this meeting, to enable discussion to take place at the upcoming Environment & Wellbeing Committee:

“Living Village adds value to Community Life and Wellbeing”

Background

The aim is to bring back the identity of the High Street by promoting its historical, social and local shopping experience. Recently, the footfall through the village centre has diminished and this is due to a number of reasons; ‘too expensive’, ‘nowhere to park’, ‘the loss of the post office’, ‘not friendly’, ‘shops are closed although they are advertised as open’, ‘no butcher baker or green grocer’. Although these are purely comments that have been made, it might have meaning. However, I and the group feel that some of these comments are unfounded; there is plenty of parking within the village, there are various shops and activities going on in the High Street it’s just that people are unaware of them. Through creative thinking and a few adjustments, as a group, Parish Council, myself, two representatives from business, ISOC and hopefully Cuckfield Society, we could bring back the identity and community spirit of this well loved historical village.

Who Uses or Walks through the Village?

- On Saturdays families with children and dogs walk into the village or up to Whitemans Green to drop off children to play football or rugby or Karate. During the week families are taking children to playgroups and school so although in a rush, they do pass through.
- Dog walkers and ramblers travel through the village during their walks.
- Retired people walk and meet up, some volunteer at the Museum or go to their allotments.
- People from outside the village come and use the Recreation Ground during summer and visit the museum.
- Visitors to Ockenden, Bookfest and the Church.

Many pass through but do they stop and visit shops and cafes? Some do but they seem to only go to one place. Is the village inviting families and dog owners and ramblers to come and visit?

How can we make the High Street come alive and welcoming?

Many new people to the village are unaware of Cuckfield's social history, the setting up of ISOC and Cuckfield Society and Parish Council. Cuckfield is not just another village; it is steeped in tradition and social enterprise. To communicate this we need businesses, local charities, the Church, Societies and the Parish Council to link up and support each other. We need to rid ourselves of the boutique image and put forward a family, dog friendly image.

People who walk through the village either on their way to school to pick up the children, or for any other reason, visitors on their way to Nymans or Borde Hill - we need to set the scene within the centre to encourage them to want to come back.

Examples

Each Business on the High Street could link up with an event, such as the Cuckoo Fayre, all the cafes and restaurants stay open and actively be seen supporting ISOC's event by having displays on the history of ISOC and sell the Independent State of Cuckfield Passport. Putting up bunting along the High Street and the Parish Council along with the museum putting up boards explaining the history of ISOC.

Supporting Cuckfield Local with their monthly market, have another event going on the same day; advertise places to have Saturday lunch or coffee.

Bookfest, in their advertising add places to eat in the village, have a map of the village in the foyer of all businesses.

Daytime concert to advertise the village.

A dispenser similar to the one in St John's Park with leaflets (picture to follow) on events within the village or 12 village walks or a map of the High Street, these could be placed at the Rugby Club, the Recreation Ground and at Queen's Hall.

Other Ideas:

- To bring variety to the village during the week we need to seek a mobile bakery or vegetable van to set up within the High Street. Encourage empty shops to allow their space to be used for a charity event.
- Improve the planting outside 'Fish and Chip' shop
- NSPCC events within the village to encourage people to visit the High Street too, i.e. linking it to Cafes or another event within the village, a 10% sale in designated shops.
- Use of Queen's Hall if it has not been hired out.
- Support the idea of a Post Office somewhere within the village and the Parish Council to keep an open dialogue with the Post Office.
- All businesses to support each other.
- More Markets!

Another fun family idea is:

To encourage families to visit the High Street is to have a few painted dinosaurs around the village, similar to the idea to have cows, snails and snow dogs in Brighton over recent years. Charles Laing Horn set up 'Wild in Art' 20 years ago, creating different size animals which were sold to business or charities who in turn painted them and then they are left on the High Street where passersby pose with them for a photo. After a few months the business or charity auctions the painted animal and proceeds go to charity. This fun idea of dinosaurs can also be linked to Whitemans Green monument and the Museum, a walk to discover the painted dinosaurs starting from Whitemans Green down to the High Street via the Museum. After a year have an auction in the Queen's Hall and the money goes to charity.

Christmas Street Festival, allowing the community to vote on the window display competition and contribute to the set up of the Christmas Street Festival, a move towards a more visual experience.

Advertising

To produce a logo that depicts a family and dog friendly High Street. To assist with getting the message across ask estate agents to advertise the logo of the village High Street, advertise events, put maps and a leaflet on the High Street within the welcoming pack. Give Maps out with parking discs. Update and improve notices boards throughout the village.

- Ask Cuckfield Society and Parish Council to advertise monthly events.
- Encourage the use of Cuckfield.org
- Parish Council website
- Grapevine
- Cuckfield Life
- Social Media, Instagram, Facebook
- Holy Trinity and the Baptist Church Newsletter

These are some ideas, but hopefully it will gather momentum and grow.