

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON SMALL SHOPS

Minutes of the meeting held at 12:00pm on 16th September 2014 at Ty Hywel

PRESENT:

Janet Finch-Saunders AM (JFS)	Chair
Keith Davies AM (KD)	Member
Russell George AM (RG)	
Shane Brennan (SB)	ACS
Sophie Mew (SM)	Secretary
Craig Lawson (CL)	Suzy Davies AM
Gareth Saunders (GS)	Janet Finch-Saunders AM

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Cross Party Group and introduced SB who would give an overview of the CPG's work over the past year.

2. PRESENTATION FROM ACS

SB gave a presentation on the CPG's work over the past year. He highlighted that the CPG had held three meetings in the past year and that the Group had coordinated the Small Business Saturday photocall in December and held a reception in the Assembly on the 15th July.

Discussion

Following the presentation, a number of issues were discussed and future discussions for the Group were proposed

Town Centres

KD shared with the Group that he would lead a debate on town centres in the Welsh Assembly, highlighting the problem of parking in town centres, which JFS agreed to attend. SB highlighted ACS' work on best practice in parking management and it was **AGREED** this document would be circulated to the Group.

Planning

The Group raised the issue of planning policy. JFS highlighted that the CPG should look at planning policy and how different regions of Wales are affected by local authorities' plans. It was suggested that the CPG should hold meetings in North Wales and mid-Wales to ensure the views of small shops across Wales are included in discussing planning policy. JFS also raised the issue of bringing properties back into use in town centres and it was **AGREED** this would be fed into a future discussion on planning policy.

Future meetings

It was noted that there would be a report on business rates in Wales, and the topic was suggested as the next subject matter for the Group to discuss. Planning was also proposed as an issue.

JFS highlighted the issue of carrier bags and the difference in charging between paper and plastic bags, in addition to retailers charging for bags for life where the charge is not passed onto charities.

KD raised the issue of crime against small retailers and what can be done to solve this problem, and that he had worked with the trade union Usdaw on a campaign to prevent crime. SB stated that ACS also worked with Usdaw and that police presence in town centres was important to prevent crime. RG suggested that the Group should write to Police and Crime Commissioners to call for support for small shops on preventing theft and to look at the responses; this was **AGREED**.

3. ELECTIONS

JFS was unanimously re-elected as Chair by the CPG, with SM being elected as Secretary unanimously.

Next Steps

It was **AGREED** that the Group's next meeting would be to discuss business rates in Wales and that potential speakers would be contacted.

It was also **AGREED** that the Group would write to the Welsh Assembly on the issue of carrier bags and ask for an update on the Government's policy.

The meeting was closed by JFS.