

Minutes of the Cross Party Group on Food

Wednesday 3rd October 2017

Attendees:

Jenny Rathbone AM	<i>Assembly Member (Chair)</i>
David Melding AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Jeremy Miles AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Huw Irranca-Davies AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Mike Hedges AM	<i>Assembly Member</i>
Kelly Frost	<i>Frosty's Green Grocers</i>
Mike Frost	<i>Frosty's Green Grocers</i>
Jack Sellers	<i>David Melding's Office</i>
Bethan Proctor	<i>Jenny Rathbone's Office (Secretary)</i>
Peter Wong	<i>Jenny Rathbone's Office</i>
Jessica Hayden	<i>Jenny Rathbone's Office</i>
Judith Gregory	<i>Senior Client Officer Education Catering</i>
Lucie Taylor	<i>CLAS Cymru Coordinator</i>
Katie Palmer	<i>Public Health Wales</i>
Rebecca Morgan	<i>Health Board</i>
Lisa Williams	<i>All Wales Nutrition Training Facilitator</i>
Amber Wheeler	<i>University of South Wales</i>
David Morris	<i>Welsh Government Food Division</i>

1. Officers for Cross Party Group

David Melding nominated Jenny as Chair. It was agreed that Jenny's office would act as Secretary. Food Cardiff, partners of the group, would disseminate notices of future meetings to other interested parties.

2. Frosty's Green Grocer's.

Kelly and Mike Frost, own and run Frosty's Green Grocers in Pontardawe with their parents. Kelly and Mike described how their business began and how it has developed.

Kelly fell seriously ill three years ago and traditional medicine had no impact on making her better. She visited a Naturopath who advised her to eat an organic, non-meat and non-dairy diet. Kelly's health improved within weeks, and therefore she and her family were inspired to start Frosty's Green Grocer's so the community would be able to have access to this advice and produce.

Kelly and Mike try to source their produce as locally as possible, and therefore buy from local farms and suppliers. They buy from a wholesalers in Lampeter, a farm in

the Gower, and local vegetables from Pontypridd. Their aim and ethos is to encourage others in the community to eat healthily, locally, and organically.

They started selling both organic and non organic, as well as fish and dairy products. They now sell only organic fruit and veg and vegan products which is more expensive than non-organic. When Frosty's went organic, they lost 50% of their customers. Frosty's do not want to be half organic as this is not in line with their ethos.

The impact on the turnover means neither of them have received a wage for over 3 months though they continue to cover their bills. They are determined to stay open and make a success of it. They've been open a lot longer than a fruit and veg shop close by that closed after only 6 months.

Kelly and Mike both agreed that it is hard to promote healthy eating.

3. Challenges

A super Lidl has opened up close by. When Lidl was closed, business was thriving. The local butchers is also finding it hard. Local cafés are using Lidl to buy their produce. Jeremy Miles asked whether it would work to be on the same site as Lidl however Kelly and Mike said no.

There are parking charges in the town centre of Pontardawe, meaning that customers are incentivised to use Tesco for its free parking. Although there is an hour's free parking, this is not enough for customers to do their shopping in numerous local shops.

Kelly and Mike said many of their customers travel some distance to buy their organic produce – this obviously contributes to food miles.

They said the 'organic' label can put people off, as they think they cannot afford it. Most people in the area can't afford it, for example a box of non organic broccoli is £5, but a box of organic broccoli is £18. Although organic is on the up in Swansea, it is not yet common in the valleys.

4. Ethos

Kelly and Mike run their business because it is their passion, rather than to make a profit. The market is very tough at the moment, and to start up a business like this is a gamble.

They stated that there are over 100 different chemicals in foods; however eating organic eliminates this.

It's a family run business. Mum and Dad run the shop when Kelly and Mike not present.

5. Surplus and Waste

Katie asked whether there were challenges around surplus and waste with the business. Kelly and Mike stated that they took home any surplus to eat themselves, they get taxed on this. Kelly and Mike also donate to the foodbank if they have a large amount left over.

6. Ideas Moving Forward

Katie asked whether they made soups or juices with leftover food. Although Mike and Kelly agreed that this was a good idea, it is difficult as additional health and safety procedures are required for hot food – temperatures have to be correct etc.

Healthy Start up Vouchers, working with Community Farms, Veg Box Scheme were suggested.

Jeremy Miles AM suggested a network with other food organisations in Pontardawe. However as the business is specifically vegan and organic, they don't do tend to do business with other shops.

Katie suggested thinking outside the box, for example forming networks for energy supply, toilet paper, etc. Could also be a way of making links in order to campaign against the parking charges.

Jenny – a fruit and veg shop in Llangollen has a close relationship with nearby restaurants. When they see their produce in danger of going off, they sell on to restaurant at a reduced price. Kelly said they had tried to form a relationship with restaurants in the area however they have not taken this up as organic is more expensive.

Huw Irranca-Davies – business model is admiral. Need to develop local market, gently educating people about going organic. Pontardawe not used to organic. Were they confident they could develop in Pontardawe? Kelly and Mike said they were stubborn. They're not leaving, but spreading the word. They have started giving talks to local libraries and schools.

Huw said that in most communities, especially in the valleys, you eat what is there. Don't push too hard, too fast. We cannot dictate to communities and individuals, we must provide choices and make healthy eating affordable.

Riverside Farmers market in Cardiff– worth visiting. RCMA have piloted farmers markets at Cardiff Uni, and Cardiff Met. Student market in Swansea might work.

Kelly and Mike are working with Swansea market- a local monthly market which brings in different producers. Hoping that will take off next March.

They should get story in the local newspaper, this is often more powerful than a paid ad.

7. Healthy Eating in Schools and Hospitals

Kelly and Mike feel that food in schools is not healthy – fresh fruit and veg is often ‘another option’, rather than compulsory and vegan is not catered for. Hospitals such as Morriston only provide Costa and Subway, neither of which are particularly healthy.

Judith Gregory explained that school meals are based on Welsh Government’s healthy eating guidelines and have to be compliant with the measure. There should be individual menus for children with special dietary requirements including vegan if requested.

There was general agreement that more needs to be done to get greater portions of fruit and veg in school meals. How do we make veg appealing in school meals? This advice needs to start early – possibly with Flying Start.

The All Wales Hospital Menu Framework provides standardised menus for Wales. Judith John has worked on this. RCMA is looking at fresh produce stall in concourse at Heath hospital.

8. Discussion for next Meeting

Katie suggested a session based on the outcome of the CCERA Rethinking Food inquiry – JR said unclear when this will be completed as only starting to take oral evidence next month.

Lucie suggested looking at supply chains post Brexit – how can we work towards feeding ourselves from local produce and being less reliant on imports (and exports).

JR suggested a good subject for next meeting was hospital food as quite a lot of work was done on this in the 4th Assembly and therefore may engage more AMs.

It was agreed that the next meeting will be

Wednesday 7th February 12pm - Conference Room B

The Peas Please National Launch is on Tuesday **24th October** in the **Pierhead at 12pm. All invited.**