



**“Coffee and Croissants” Networking meeting  
Wednesday 5th June 2024  
9am, Blossoms Cafe, High Street, Wells**

**Minutes**

In a change to the usual format, this meeting had no agenda but was billed as a networking meeting with special guests Police Sergeant Simon Lancey and Neighbourhood Constable Darren Pearson who were invited along to talk about policing in Wells.

Paddy O’Hagan was also invited along and opened the meeting by introducing himself as the founder of the Wells Food Festival - he also runs Wells Art Contemporary (WAC) in Wells Cathedral which has a footfall of 22-25,000 people in August. He asked for ideas of how the Chamber of Commerce could be represented at WAC. There are 20 installations in the Cathedral and the exhibition is asking for sponsors from £200 in return for company names on the marketing materials. He invited all members of the Chamber to the private view on 2nd August. He mentioned that the Anthony Gormely statue on the front of the Cathedral was going to be taken down shortly - the statue is worth £500,000 and that having the statue and WAC helps promote Wells to a different sort of tourist who is likely to spend more money in the City per visit.

Paddy also suggested that all the festivals in Wells could coordinate their marketing to help bring in more people to the city - for example, the Food Festival brought in 100 people from Wellington (of 40-50,000 people who came) and was/is sponsored by Charlie Bigham. Perhaps they could get together to offer some sort of pass for entry to all of the festivals.

*Anyone from the Chamber who wants to come along to the WAC private view or would like more information about sponsoring the event, contact Louis and he will pass on Paddy’s details to them.*

Police Sergeant Simon Lancey and Neighbourhood Constable Darren Pearson were then invited to talk. Simon talked mainly about shoplifting - reporting and evidence being

the main issues. He told us that the police generally know who is committing the crimes, but it is difficult to get the evidence against them to prosecute.

He also told us that Avon and Somerset Police have frozen their recruitment for now, Wells have three PCSOs and one is leaving soon so they will be down to two.

Wells has 12 reported cases of shoplifting a month - of the 139 reported over a year, 65 were from major supermarkets and 22 major shop chains. The rate was 14 a month , but has come down to 12.

In Frome, 396 cases have been reported in the year - 120 from major supermarkets, this has gone up from 22 to 32 incidents a month.

However, shop owners in Wells disagree with these figures and feel that shoplifting and antisocial behaviour has increased which is not reflected in these figures. Simon emphasised that people need to report incidents and that he is happy to come to more meetings if needed. Louis suggested that with fewer police officers visible on the streets, antisocial behaviour has increased.

They have tried to park vehicles (they have 2) around the City on market day to help deter criminals, but it can be difficult to get a response for an ongoing crime. Simon and Darren cover Wells and the surrounding area and other neighbourhood teams come in to help on occasions such as carnival night, but the PCSOs don't have the power of arrest.

There was a question from the floor re domestic violence which affected 20% of children in Wells - Simon promised to get hold of accurate figures for these offences. He also mentioned that there was still an issue with county lines drugs in Wells.

A police enforcement officer present at the meeting asked about parking issues in Wells and how to prevent delivery drivers parking on pavements and so on. However, parking has been decriminalised so there is not a lot the police can do to help with this issue.

The meeting then closed around 10am.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 2nd July, 6pm, Old Mill meeting room