



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

## **QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

<b>Question From:</b>	County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe
<b>Subject:</b>	Covid19 restriction guidance
<b>Question To:</b>	County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Leader and County Councillor Iain McIntosh, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning & Housing

### **Question:**

Last year I was approached by Powys County Council [PCC] to look at social distancing measure that the Welsh government wanted in Hay and other towns in Powys. As local member I felt it was right that this was led by the community, so I handed over discussions to the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce. I attended the first meeting and it was stated that it was a Welsh Government grant for towns to introduce measures where social distancing was difficult. It was also stated that due to Hay's narrow main streets doing nothing was not an option and if the town did not do anything then PCC would introduce what it thought was correct to protect the public. At this point I stepped away and left the Town Council and Chamber to move forward with proposal. I need to put this in context of the timing around the pandemic and there was no traveling etc. The Town Council put forward some proposals late last year and PCC applied a traffic order for this May. Since the start of the year, we have moved so far with easing and the excellent vaccination programme that we are in a different world it seems to where we were 4 months ago.

Last week I stepped in and arranged a meeting with officers and Hay Town Council to look at these measures as it has become clear that messages from PCC and Welsh Government to the town council and the public have been confusing with lots of mixed messages around who was responsible and concerns that this was about PCC introducing a café culture not just covid19 restrictions.

I was pleased to see that officers agreed there is some flexibility in the road closure order to allow changes. This was a great relief to the Town Council as it allowed them to listen to the community. We have had a hard year in Hay and the restrictions have supported business but also slowed business down this has also been harder due to the difficulties arising from being a border town location. Now as we are seeing easing of restrictions in the near future (we are presently in tier 4 and soon moving to tier 3) will we see alterations to social distancing measures?

I must say safety of the community and visitors is paramount and I fully understand the street being closed when the town is busy (like a supermarket closes when too many are in) but I am hearing concerns from businesses and residents that the present closures in Hay and Brecon are having the opposite effect and are turning business away.

Nationally we are moving out of restrictions, and I am writing to you to ask that a clear plan from the council of when restrictions will be lifted and how will this affect our towns with closed streets. This can't just be a Town Council decision it needs direction and recommendations from officers, and it feels and looks like town councillors are having to make decisions without expert advice or guidance.

I would like to ask that the council set up a covid19 working group to support the business community and towns in Powys to support them in this challenging times. This could include restrictions guidance for communities and business support.