

Date: 15.11.2019

Subject: Steyning Forum and The "Happy to Chat Bench"

Good Afternoon John and Hazel

As you are aware, our proposal for the; 'Happy to Chat Bench' was on the Premise Committees meeting agenda held on the 5th of November 2019. It was great that this initiative was supported by the majority of Councillors with a positive recommendation. We are really excited that it has made its way onto the Agenda to be discussed, hopefully agreed, at Full Council on Monday the 18th of November 2019.

Firstly, a bit of information about the Steyning Forum for the benefit of Councillors. The Forum is an online think-tank, for residents who want to produce good ideas to serve our town's community and the surrounding villages. The Forum is an inclusive group that everyone can join. Our main platform for discussion is via our Facebook page but we encourage involvement outside of this format as well. We have some great projects being discussed and we are seeking to work with as many local groups, businesses, societies and committees as we set our sights on positive community engagement.

The 'Happy to Chat Bench' is our most advance project presently. Just to cover a bit of back ground, I am sure you are aware, Isolation, loneliness, health and wellbeing are all hot topics in today's society and we believe that the 'Happy to Chat Bench' would be a fantastic opportunity for the community and in a small way, we hope that it will start to help addressing some of the above issues.

The idea is quite simple, we will identify a space in the bus shelter, in Steyning High Street, with signage and invite people to sit and chat. It's a fairly relaxed initiative and we hope it will be well supported by the Parish Council as well as the community.

We have had some really positive comments from members of the public about the proposal. Debbie Wood has also been included in discussions and she has also offered her support for the 'Happy to Chat Bench'. This is only the first step in this project, there are many more ideas to explore in the hope of achieving something really amazing. This trial installation will test the water and we hope that we can build a positive relationship with Steyning Parish Council as we move forward.

We are hoping that Full Council will back the recommendation of the Premises Committee, and will join Councillor Hanson and Councillor Gary Sullivan in supporting this project. We have every confidence that all Councillors will get behind this initiative for the one month trial period for this project with the intention of extending it if successful. We very much look forward to working with Steyning Parish Council as the Steyning Forum grows and develops.

Kind Regards

Russell G K Barnes