

MAYORS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2023



***Llamau at The October's Artistic Cowbridge Coffee morning
with Steve the local CSO***

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates members of the activities undertaken by the Mayor since the Septembers Council meeting up to the 7th October.
- 1.2 The report also takes the opportunity to update the Council on two initiatives that have the potential to positively impact the Town's residents, visitors and the business community.

2. Events attended since September's Council

Events Attended

2.1 Ruth and I attended two events in September. On the 23rd we went to a Music Festival concert held in the Holly Cross Church. The performance was by artistic Director Joseph Fort and the Choir of St Paul's Knightsbridge who performed six Motets by Bach regarded as some of the greatest choral work of the 18th century. As with all the events run by the festival the performance was of the highest standard and extremely enjoyable.

2.2 The following day we attended the Penarth Civic service held in the All-Saints Church Penarth with refreshments and entertainment following in the Paget Rooms. At the event I took the opportunity to arrange a meeting with Llantwit Major's Mayor and the Chairman of St Athens to discuss areas of mutual interest. This meeting to be held on the 11th October 2023.

Octobers Coffee Morning

2.3 The next in the line of coffee mornings was held on the 7th October and was themed **Artistic Cowbridge**. Several local artists and two craft groups exhibited their works, including our very own Ian Watkins who also did a short question and answer session covering how he developed his love for art, his style, preferred mediums and recent exhibitions.



Ian with yours truly in front of two of the three pieces of art he brought to exhibit. The flowers picture was painted the day before the coffee morning.

2.4 The event was well attended and the dates for the second Cowbridge Open Art Competition were published. It is to be held from the Monday 19th to Saturday 31st August 2024 in the Old Hall. Put the dates in your diaries.

2.5 Llamau attended and yet again my daughters Lowri and Rhian baked a themed cake and homemade cookies.



Artistic Cowbridge Cake

The next coffee morning is on Saturday 4th November in the **Lesser Hall** being done in conjunction with David Breen and the museum and is themed ***Science and History***.

3. In October/November Month

- 3.1 Up and coming commitments, since writing the report, include, the Wine Tasting Evening, Llantwit Major civic service and as said above the November coffee morning.

4. Community Initiatives

- 4.1 Since the last council we have seen progress on street wi-fi and mobile signals and have been approached by a company called Near Me Now to help support the rolling out a business digital application for four Vale Towns, including Cowbridge using Shared Prosperity funding,

Street Wi-Fi/Mobile Signals

- 4.2 Alun Cairns recently held a meeting with Bridgend Council to discuss how they have installed Wi-Fi in their four towns. He then invited me to a meeting with Phil Chapple of the Vale to discuss the installation of public Wi-Fi in Cowbridge high street.
- 4.3 The way this will be achieved will be to install the Wi-Fi on the two CCTV cameras in the high street, utilising the fibre connections and then spreading the coverage using repeaters up and down the high street. The capital costs will be eligible for grant. There will be annual running costs which will have to be met but it is thought that the first two years could be rolled up into the grant application. However, long term revenue costs funding will need to be agreed with the Vale, but there is currently an expectation that the Town Council will meet this cost estimated at £3,000 per year based on Bridgend costs.
- 4.4 The benefits that will accrue will be public/business access to Wi-Fi allowing Wi-Fi calling and internet access. If install more than the basic service it will be possible track footfall in the high street and allow targeted adverts etc..
- 4.5 The Town Council is being asked to lead on the preparing the grant application working with the Vale and BT. So, the decision required is to

agree to prepare the application for the installation of Wi-Fi in the high street.

Mobile Signal

4.6 Through the efforts of Charles Champion and Alun Cairns EE have submitted a planning application for a mobile phone aerial in Cowbridge and I understand other providers have recognised the poor signal in Cowbridge and are looking to boost

Business Digital Application

4.6 The initiative is called VZTA Smart Towns, developed by a company called Near Me Now, its forerunner was piloted in Cowbridge pre the pandemic. The application has now been developed further and it is now in use in several Towns across Wales. The company have secured Shared Prosperity Funding, from the Vale, to roll out the application across the four towns. They have already undertaken town scoping exercises and are looking for support from the Town Council to engage with the business and have provided the following overview of VZTA:

VZTA Overview

VZTA is a brand-new Smart Towns Ecosystem product that creates micro economies for smart digital towns through an ecosystem as a service based approach. VZTA has been brought to fruition collaboratively alongside four Welsh Government departments, five local authorities and a small army of town stakeholders, businesses, consumers, sector experts and academics.

The VZTA is growing into an ecosystem of towns, villages and clusters of businesses; creating a one-stop-shop for residents, visitors or tourists to interact with businesses at home or when visiting new places. VZTA strengthens the physical presence of bricks and mortar businesses both on the high street and in the community; bringing communities of businesses together in one digital place to facilitate communication with the organisations that support them. The entire platform is built ready to scale and underpinned by a “no town left behind” approach to ensure our post-industrial, coastal and rural destinations are not left behind in the move to digital destinations.

4.7 The Town Council is asked to support to Near Me Now in engaging with businesses to roll out the application.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Town Council is asked to approve:

- i) Note the events attended by the Mayor.
- ii) The preparation of a grant application for high street Wi-Fi working with the Vale and BT.
- ii) The Town Council provide support to Near Me Now to introduce the VZTA Smart Towns application.

