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# The Big Conversation

**Focus Group: neighbourhood plan consultation**

## Meeting for Village Businesses and Sole Traders

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### **Present**

Fiona from Dolly's Pizza

Jan Brown representing his own business and the Shop

Sarah Cooper – Seamstress

Steve Lock & his assistant, Megan

Bill Hewlett representing the Community Hall

Michelle Bird from Oak House

There was a wide-ranging discussion, but the main points that emerged were as follows:

- It was felt that there should be a directory of local Stutton businesses made available – primarily via the Village Website. This is not intended as an advertising feature, but more of an awareness raising exercise. A leaflet could be produced for use in the Shop, Oak House and other sites.
- It was felt that it is good for local businesses to network and get to know how they could support one another i.e. by using each other's skills or equipment. Jan pointed out that he had duplicating equipment which could be used at a lower cost than going out of the village to other providers. There is an industrial sewing machine in the village for example. We were reminded that the Shop would receive parcels on behalf of others for £1 per parcel. Fiona could assist with software training and website design – the latter would allow local businesses to grow by raising awareness of what they offered on the web.

- There was some frustration expressed that, although information about what was happening or was available in the village was actively promoted via the village website and through Stutton Roundabout, there was a disconnect and people were not as well informed as they could be. It was also thought that what was available at Stutton should be more actively promoted at, say, the Alton Water Campsite.
- The facilities at Oak House could be used by residents in the village but not everyone was aware this was possible. Michelle talked about the use of the fully accessible bath (and soon a shower), eating in the restaurant (£6.75 for 2 courses) or attending social events. Guest WIFI was available for use. Oak House would love to see more local people accessing what was on offer there.
- There was discussion as to how the Community Hall could be developed so as to offer facilities local businesses might wish to use. It was agreed that conferencing was a possible area that could be developed if WIFI & AV, refreshments and appropriate seating/tables are available ready – just as you would find at any conference venue. Not being intruded upon by other Hall users would be crucial as would access to a separate entrance. It was agreed that it was difficult to predict what might prove attractive but, as Steve said, ‘Create the right habitat and the wildlife will move in.’ It would be interesting to work with local businesses so that Hall users could be provided with a directory of services that could support whatever event the Hall had been booked for.
- Concerns were raised about:
  - Poor Mobile Phone Signal
  - Inadequate pavements – a particular concern for Oak House residents wanting to access the Shop or events at the Hall. There was considerable interest in the notion of a ‘Greenway’ route.
  - Volume & speed of traffic – the greenway again
  - Parking on pavements

There was a very positive atmosphere through the event and the comment was made that we should ‘keep the dialogue going’ with another breakfast event in, say, 3 months.