



Monday 3rd December 2018
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

There were 14 members of the Café Society group present at this meeting

Vivienne B sent her apologies.

The mandatory contribution scheme of £1.50 per attending member is running smoothly and the money and drinks order were kindly collected and organised by Margaret H.

In the absence of Group Coordinator, Vivienne B, Tim D kindly agreed to chair the meeting.

A summary of the meeting's discussions follows.

Mike S

o Discussion Topics

Is lying ever justified?

- Examples were given of situations where group members thought it was acceptable to lie:
 - o In order to avoid harm
e.g. Lying to soldiers about the presence or whereabouts of civilians
 - o In order not to offend or out of politeness
e.g. Lying about the appearance of another person's clothing or presentation
- According to most group members, telling lies under such circumstances was the easiest way to keep society comfortable
- Under normal circumstances, most members of the group felt that it is not justified to lie but recognised many layers and levels in the act of lying
- Keeping quiet and hiding the truth was considered to be a form of lying by most group members
- The practice and self-improvement technique of Radical Honesty was raised. This philosophy asserts that lying is the primary source of modern human stress, and speaking bluntly and directly, even about painful or taboo subjects, will make people happier by creating an intimacy not possible while hiding things:
www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_Honesty
- The group generally felt that most people lie in order to protect their livelihood or jobs, especially in government culture
- A group member with experience of working with homeless people explained that there was a distinct behavioural pattern of lying exhibited by desperate individuals. Group members, on the other hand, believed that religious workers (e.g. priests and ministers) did not tell lies
- In general, the group expressed the opinion that lying is a normal and tolerable part of our culture

How should the town of Shrewsbury promote itself with regards to tourism?

- This topic was introduced by Ken C who pointed out that Chester, despite being a similar town, had four times the economy of Shrewsbury thanks to greater tourism
- Some group members struggled to highlight reasons why tourists would come to Shrewsbury, while others suggested that Shrewsbury could promote itself as part of the hinterland – areas of Shropshire and Wales significant in The Industrial Revolution
- Shrewsbury's night-time economy was cited and most members thought that it could be boosted by cultural venues (restaurants, theatres, halls) rather than drinking venues (pubs and nightclubs)
- Some group members questioned the need for more tourists and whether the tourism industry creates any substantial employment
- The Flaxmill & Maltings building along with Shrewsbury's old canal were mentioned as two potential tourism assets that could be developed
- The council's bus service was heavily criticised for restricting tourism by failing to provide buses in the evenings and on Sundays
- By focussing on the right type of shops, some members of the group thought that Shrewsbury had the potential to attract tourists as a centre for shopping (in line with Shrewsbury BID's One-Off / Original campaign)
- A member highlighted the under-use of the Theatre Severn facilities during the daytime
- Other members were disappointed with the first-impressions of the town on display to those who arrive by train and bus. The area around Castle Foregate and Castle Street has many empty shops and homeless people
- It was mentioned that some years ago the council made a big push for commerce, stating that "Retail is the future", but most group members felt that this approach was out-dated and had failed

What subjects should ideally be included in a junior school curriculum?

- This topic was introduced by Denise M who proposed that the focus of teaching children aged 4 to 11 should revolve around emotional, creative and mindful topics
- Many members of the group believed that the way educational subjects are taught needs radically overhauling due to the introduction of the internet
- Many group members thought that subjects like Philosophy, which are currently introduced at secondary school levels, would be far more useful and effective if delivered at primary and junior schools
- Subjects like depression, citizenship, thinking and those involving the creative arts were suggested by group members as being vital for early education
- The activity of 'playing out' was universally approved as being critically important
- A group member suggested that National Trust properties should be compelled to make their facilities available to early education programmes
- "You should not teach for the benefit of the economy, you should teach for the development of the child", was one pearl of wisdom offered by a group member

If you could rid the world of one thing, what would it be?

- This topic was introduced by Harold B who went on to declare that it would be his intention to remove country borders
- After further comments on this idea, it was agreed to propose this topic for discussion in its own right at a subsequent meeting

Do you agree with the NHS axing and restricting surgical procedures?

- This topic was introduced by Margaret T who expressed concern about the availability of treatment under NHS guidelines
- In general, the group understood that budget limitations meant that the NHS had to prioritise medical treatment and accepted that there would always be debate about what was offered
- The group felt that the government had made a deliberate effort to encourage people to pay for private health care through gradual deterioration of the NHS
- There was much discussion about the prioritisation of terminal illnesses and whether it is appropriate to allocate disproportionate funds to lost causes rather than treatable or preventative issues

Can anything be done about the pollution in Shrewsbury?

- This topic was introduced by Pam P who felt strongly that pollution in Shrewsbury was being ignored and that the community health consequences were significant
- On-going legislation to phase-out motor vehicles was discussed and members of the group were pessimistic that this would be achieved effectively or in time
- Yet again, the council's bus service was heavily criticised for failing to provide a viable alternative to private transport and not using more environmentally-friendly technology
- Most members of the group thought that private vehicles should be banned or restricted within Shrewsbury's town centre river loop
- There was a suggestion that the introduction of cows to The Quarry park area could have a beneficial effect on the inner urban area
- Manchester was cited as a city that is working to become carbon-neutral:
www.manchesterclimate.com/plan
- The group concluded that there is insufficient political will and interest in environmental responsibility and didn't expect the issues to be addressed in the near future

Is the smartphone the opium of the people?

- This topic was introduced by Pam P who, on a beautiful day, noticed that all other passengers on a recent train journey were engaged using their smartphones
- Other group members recounted observing mothers paying no attention to their children yet engrossing themselves in relationships with their phones
- Some group members expressed concern that a cultural addiction to smartphones is causing a decline in communication skills and quality of life
- A group member highlighted an experimental policy by the restaurant chain Frankie & Benny's which asks customers to leave their phones in lockable storage deposit boxes to encourage personal communication when dining
- The group members were polled to see how many of them had a phone currently with them. Practically every member was caught in possession

Is it fair that £11.6 million has been spent looking for Madeline McCann?

- This topic was raised by Margaret H who expressed concern about the unique attention this case has received
- The group members agreed that it was bizarre that so much money and publicity had been devoted to the investigation and resolutely felt this to be inappropriate

How long should we continue to 'celebrate' the Armistice?

- This topic was introduced by Margaret H who questioned why a one-day remembrance event had developed into weeks of military and war glorification
- Group members confirmed that church-based remembrance services were dwindling while poppies and military parades seemed to be more widely associated to all military action rather than World War I in particular
- There was some discussion about the significance of the colour of decorative poppies and the reaction to these colours in different scenarios

○ Future Topics

The group did not have time to spend some minutes of the session agreeing upon questions for discussion at the next meeting. Below is the list of topics that re available. Hot topical issues should be emailed to the [group coordinator](#) prior to the next meeting.

- Wouldn't the world be a better place without borders? (Harold B)

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on **Monday 7th January 2019** at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).

