

Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Management Committee - Monday 19 February 2024 - 6.30pm

at The George Hotel

Present: Present: Jane Rockett (Chair), Karen Hussey (Vice Chair), Alison Hayward (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Mark Dowdeswell, Colin Hayward, Miranda Woodman.

Minutes

1. Apologies

Barry Searle, Karen Dowdeswell, Francesca Dowdeswell. Matt McAuley

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Colin; **Seconded** Karen.

3. Matters arising

- (a) **Light Up Axminster** - Kara Burrough was unable to attend to explain plans for the future. It is hoped that she can join us next month.
- (b) **Tourism** - Barrie provided an update on the continuing development of the volunteer-led initiative www.whatsinaxminster.co.uk. New content was being added on a steady basis and was now evolving to cover tourist information such as walks, gardens and places to visit, which was very much in line with the Chamber's own strategy.
- (c) **Training initiatives** - Jane provided details on two recent Chamber workshops led for us by Cosmic. Both had proved useful to those who attended. Cosmic was offering four further support hours - Jane will look at the options for those. She will also talk further to Becky Lippett about a previously discussed workshops on how to be seen online. **Action:** Jane.
- (d) **Breakfast briefing from Bank of England** - Jane had attended and provided details on the briefing, which she said seemed more positive than was currently being experienced by small businesses locally.
- (e) **Street Banners 2024** - Barrie reminded the committee of the plans to produce around ten further banners for this summer. The aim would be to put the first of them in place in May ahead of the Axminster Gate to Plate.

- (f) **Model railway project** - Barrie said that a grant decision was awaited to enable the project to be extended, notably by adding content to the model, producing schools materials and providing equipment through which to record people's memories. Given the extent of local enthusiasm for the project, he was also conscious of the potential to raise funds via a crowdfunder and / or an event.

4. **Correspondence**

It was reported that Steve Holt had now resigned from the Management Committee due to other commitments but had nonetheless offered to help. The committee felt that there was potential to run workshops of the type Steve had proposed. Barrie will liaise with him.

Action: Barrie

5. **Finance**

Update on finances - Alison provided an update on finances to 31 January 2024, which was the Chamber's year-end. They showed a surplus of £785.99. A total of £3,348.65 was held at the bank or in cash, with £1,724.95 ring fenced for banners, and the railway showing an overspend of £157.11.

6. **Memberships**

While actual membership numbers are in flux at the beginning of a new financial year, the total remains over 50, with several further 'warm' candidates identified for contact.

Alison and Barrie were to meet with Adrian Lausch to discuss the mechanics of the Stripe system and the way in which we integrate renewals from members wishing to pay by BACS or cash. The Stripe renewals had been coming in steadily over the previous few days.

Action: Alison / Barrie

Alison explained the potential need to pay a data protection fee to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). She will investigate further.

Action: Alison

7. **Key Chamber roles**

Jane was planning to attend a volunteering event at Waffle on 26 February in the hope that it might be possible to identify one or more people willing to take on admin and other responsibilities. Barrie explained that, while stepping down as Secretary in May, he would remain happy to input to projects

Action: Jane

8. **Axminster Town Council report**

Councillor Mark Dowdeswell summarised recent council activities including:

- A planning meeting to discuss revisions to the planning application for a new building on the site of the former Oliver Joseph gym
- The parish meeting would take place on 4 March and would include a discussion on flooding, with input from the EA and EDDC
- The draft report would be available soon for the Neighbourhood Plan
- Discussion relating to the potential availability of £15m of 'levelling up' funding in Devon. It was felt that it was most likely to go to large unitary authorities.
- Discussions taking place on possible revisions to the council's meeting schedule in order to make best use of staff time
- Wildflowers planting planned on the Tesco bank.

8. Axminster Gate to Plate 2024

The committee discussed the Chamber's involvement in Axminster Gate to Plate 2024 and ways in which town centre businesses could be encouraged to take advantage of the greatly increased footfall likely that day. A meeting was planned with Axminster Town Council to discuss ways in which this could best be achieved. Mark provided examples of the ways in which Swish and Flick were planning to engage with the event, including a child themes trail around the town. One suggestion discussed by the committee involved creating a Chamber Cafe as a focal point {Update - eat: Festivals have been contacted since the meeting and, while supportive of us having a stand to host entertainments or other free activities, were concerned that selling coffee etc would compete with those paying for pitches and have environmental health implications. We need to think further}.

Action: All

9. 'Shop Local' initiatives

The committee focused its attention on initiatives for the early part of the summer, accepting that it was already too late to run something effective at Easter. It was felt that the Scarecrow Trail first suggested several months ago could usefully be promoted during the fortnight in May ahead of the Gate to Plate. A team will pursue this further.

Action: Jane / Karen / Alison

10. Chamber logo

Barrie reminded the committee of the need to agree a new bespoke logo for the Chamber, which had for some time been using the Town Crest. He showed ideas he had developed, from which one was chosen for slight further updating. {See attachment to these minutes}

Action: Barrie

11, Any other business

Barrie mentioned the need to update the latest version of the town map displayed in the panel next door to the former Boots. Colin offered the services of the Community Shed to repair or replace the wooden frame.

Action: Colin / Barrie

11. Date of next meeting

Monday 18th March 2024 - 6.30pm - Axminster Carpets