

Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Annual General Meeting - Monday 22 May 2023

at The Bradshaw Room, Axminster Heritage Centre

Present: Kate Batchelor (Dollyhotdogs), Tony Benger (Tony Benger Landscaping), Stuart Carrington (Westcotts Chartered Accountants), Michael Coddington (Wells Carpets), Lin Coley (Plastic Free Axminster), Stuart Courtman (Axminster Heritage Centre), Stewart Dodd (River Cottage), Karen Dowdeswell (Swish & Flick), Mark Dowdeswell (Swish & Flick), Rebecca Green (Axminster Heritage Centre), Alison Hayward (Axminster Property & Axminster Care Service), Colin Hayward (Axminster Community Shed), Barrie Hedges (Archway Bookshop), Emma Herrod (The Vending Shed), Karen Hussey ((WG Potter), Anders Larsson (Wells Carpets), Adrian Lausch (Pink Pigeon Digital), Becky Lippett (Axminster Town Council), Kay Pike (Plastic Free Axminster), Claire Ranyard (Jurassic Glamping), Jane Rockett (Axminster Printing), Nigel Sadler (Axminster Heritage Centre), Barry Searle (Axminster Carpets), Alan Styles (Axminster Tools), Miranda Woodman (Axminster Carpets).

Minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jess Brooks, Pippa Galvin, Annette Health-Coleman, Steve Holt and Gemma Moore

2. Minutes of last AGM

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2022 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Alison Hayward, **Seconded:** Karen Hussey.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising

4. Chair's report

In her review, Chair Jane Rockett began by thanking all those who had contributed to a busy and productive year. She listed key activities including:

- * Introducing and winning crowdfunding for further street banners
- * Maintaining community benches
- * Easter Trail, Christmas Trail and Children's Grotto
- * Funding Coronation bunting
- * Setting up and developing a new website, online business directory and, most recently, a banners website
- * Issuing regular MailChimp member newsletters
- * An active presence on social media

- * Contributing to the continuing 'Axminster Eats' and planned 'Axminster Gate to Plate' food events
- * Running 'Resilience Workshops' in partnership with Business Information Point
- * Planning for further workshops
- * Participating in the Axminster Renewal Forum
- * Planning for networking and business support events
- * Working with landlords to provide a list of available commercial properties

She also appealed to those who had yet to join for the current year to do so. An annual subscription of £50 was, she said, excellent value given what was being achieved for the benefit of all.

A vote of thanks to Jane for her commitment to the Chamber's work in the past year was unanimously approved (Proposed by Barrie Hedges, Seconded by Karen Hussey)

The full Chair's report is available from www.axminster.biz.

5. Treasurer's report

In the absence of Jess Brooks, the Treasurer's report for the year to 31 January 2023 was presented by Jane Rockett. In summary, it showed income of £1,139.04 and expenses of £6,754.79 resulting in a deficit for the year of £5,615.75. The balance brought forward of £8,178.41 had now been reduced to £2,562.66. At the time of the meeting we had £3,878.42 in the current account and £1,656.49 in the reserve account.

The full Treasurer's report is available from www.axminster.biz.

6. Election of officers

The following officers were appointed for the year ahead

- **Chair** - Jane Rockett, proposed by Karen Hussey, seconded by Alison Hayward
- **Vice Chair** - Karen Hussey, proposed by Jane Rockett, seconded by Sandie Draper
- **Treasurer** - Stuart Carrington, proposed by Karen Hussey, seconded by Karen Dowdeswell
- **Secretary** - Barrie Hedges, proposed by Colin Hayward, seconded by Jane Rockett

In addition to the officers, the following were elected to the Management Committee (proposed en bloc by Jane Rockett, seconded by Karen Hussey).

Alison Hayward, Sandie Draper, Karen Dowdeswell, Mark Dowdeswell, Emma Rowe, Jan Rowe, Ellis Holt, Emma Herrod, Colin Hayward, Laura Tiffin, Miranda Woodman / Barry Searle - Axminster Carpets, (interchangeable), Matt McAuley / Kelly Wakeley, Axminster Tools (interchangeable).

7. Presentations

Those present enjoyed presentations by three leaders - two from well known companies who contribute significantly to the local economy and reputation of the town, and the third making a key contribution to the town's community and its appeal to visitors:

Alan Styles, Managing Director, Axminster Tools
Stewart Dodd, Managing Director, River Cottage
Nigel Sadler, Axminster Heritage Centre

In each case, the presenters provided background to their activities and an update on the challenges that are driving them. All were thanked for their valuable contribution to the AGM.

8. Future direction

The AGM concluded with a wide ranging discussion around potential areas of improvement for the town and those where Chamber input might assist. Points covered included:

- Ways in which town centre businesses can be encouraged / assisted to improve the look of their properties and the re-painting of fixtures such as pavement bollards.
- The need to ensure that all rubbish was cleared following the Thursday street market.
- The increase in town centre traffic congestion as a result of the main red light staying for longer on 'red'
- The benefits of achieving a return of commercial life in the area around the Old Courthouse. It was reported that the Arts Cafe was on course to re-open.
- The importance of short-term free parking in the town centre.
- The potential value of the Chamber producing a short video to promote the 'shop local' message.
- The need for Axminster to better promote its attractions, including having a tourist strategy.
- The delays in providing new finger pointer direction signs in town centre and better promotion of the town on the A35.

The Chamber's management committee will consider all the above and both issues in the coming months.

{Note: as Axminster Town Council's new representative on the Chamber, Cllr Becky Lippett has, since the meeting, provided responses on several of the above as follows:

Finger Pointers - these are ordered and in progress. But there has been some delays from the manufacturer. They are coming!

Rubbish Problems after market day - Initially this needs to be fed back to Jim Rowe in the first instance as he would be responsible for market rubbish being left over.

Bollards needing repainting - this is a Devon highways issue but they are unlikely to carry out this work themselves as only absolutely necessary work is currently been done due to budget cuts. They may give permission for us to do it though so I will take this up with Ian Hall.

Traffic Lights staying on Red - the timer was currently adjusted on them to make them stay on longer. This was after local elderly residents complained to Ian Hall that they weren't staying red long enough for them to get across the road. So they've been made to stay on longer. This has a slightly adverse effect on the traffic flow but it was decided that pedestrian safety was more important.}

