

Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Minutes of Management Committee meeting

Held at the offices of Bowes Brooks on Monday 17 January 2022

Present: Jane Rockett (acting Chair), Jess Brooks (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (acting Secretary), Alison Hayward, Annette Heath-Coleman, Karen Hussey, Steve Holt (Axminster Town Council representative), Adrian Lausch (Guest re website)

Apologies: None

1: Minutes: The minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 15 November 2021 were approved (proposed by Jess and seconded by Karen).

2: Matters arising: The Axminster Business Awards were due to be announced at a ceremony at the Community Waffle House the following day. Discussion focused on the model used by Marketing West for the organisation and judging of the awards and the publicity given to them. It was agreed that the Chamber's / Totally Locally Axminster's role as a supporter of the scheme should be reviewed at a future meeting. **Action** - Barrie – include on Feb or March agenda

3: Totally Locally Axminster / Action in Axminster: Given the re-emergence of Chamber and the commonality of officers between the two, Barrie expressed the view that it now made sense for Totally Locally Axminster to be more closely integrated administratively, while its role representing retailers and running loyalty initiatives continued. Discussion over the future of the Action in Axminster group, in which both Chamber and Totally Locally Axminster are implicit, was delayed pending further discussions. **Action:** Barrie – discuss next steps on AIA with other parties involved and report back.

4: Correspondence

- (a) From Hilary Kircaldie to Jane thanking Chamber for flowers and chocolate sent as a thank you upon her retirement.
- (b) Jane has written to Cindy Furse Light Up Axminster to congratulate her on the success of the Christmas lights event in November 2021 and inviting discussions on a more closely coordinated joint approach to Christmas events in 2022. Reply awaited.
- (c) EDDC has invited Jane (representing Chamber) and Barrie (representing Totally Locally Axminster) to join a stakeholder meeting on 26 January to discuss plans for two projects focusing on the future of Axminster. It is understood that some individual businesses have been invited also. **Action:** Jane / Barrie – attend and report back
- (d) Plastic Free Axminster – Jane had accepted an invitation to attend a recent meeting. The group would like to encourage Chamber members to join its various initiatives. Agreed that a planned new Chamber Facebook group for members could include such material. **Action:** Jane – liaise with Plastic Free Axminster

5: Treasurer's report

The problems accessing the Chamber's main bank account persisted, making it impossible to access statements and operate in an efficient way. It is hoped that it will be possible to get the necessary sign-off signature from a previous signatory. Failing that, Jess / Karen will address the issue direct with the Nat West Bank. The separate Totally Locally Axminster bank account has a £6,397 positive balance. **Action:** Karen / Jess – sort bank account access

6: Constitution

The meeting noted the new constitution as amended at the 15 November EGM. The officer team was still short of a Vice Chair (in an 'acting' capacity until the next AGM) . Karen was proposed by Barrie, seconded by Alison and agreed by those present. Given her business commitments, she made clear that she could not automatically transition to Chair.

7: Chamber 2022

Priorities

Barrie circulated a draft social media post and newsletter listing the various priorities that had previously been discussed as a basis for the revitalised Chamber's key services to its members. They formed the basis for the drive that was now needed to communicate with and recruit members.

Website

Chamber now needed to get its long awaited new website into place as a 'go to' information resource that brought all its information together. While Ric Edgell had kindly indicated that he could assist with the technical build, his commitment to his business had now made that impossible. Barrie introduced Adrian Lausch of (Membury based) Pink Pigeon Digital who was prepared to take on the 'build' side of the task, working with Barrie as the producer of content and at limited cost. Adrian detailed the background to his business and the development of his own website builder which had recently been employed very successfully for the new Axminster Community Shed (www.axminstercommunityshed.co.uk). Adrian believed it would be possible to integrate or link to specific facilities for the collection of memberships and the creation of an Axminster Business Directory. The go ahead was given for the project to progress as quickly as possible. **Action:** Barrie / Adrian – progress

Skills and Training

Being able to provide or guide members to cost-effective training opportunities is key. We need to use the new comms channels to consult and also to identify what is already on offer. **Action:** Barrie – contact Petra Davies, Business Information Point and others to assess existing sources of potential support

Representing businesses on key issues

Chamber has a right to be consulted on planning applications and other issues involving local authorities and others. We may need to identify a specific member / volunteer to monitor and report. Steve undertook to provide reports from Axminster Town Council on activities affecting businesses. **Action:** Steve – set up report process; Barrie – approach other bodies who now need to recognise and consult Chamber.

Events

As part of its consultation process with businesses, Chamber will ask what events would be appreciated, including networking opportunities. Jane will develop a questionnaire to guide the process. **Action:** Jane – draft questionnaire

Jane was keen for Chamber to have a presence at the Axminster Vale Show on 18 and 19 June. It was felt that an information point / gazebo might work well. **Action:** Jane / Karen – plan

8: Totally Locally Axminster update

A report on current and potential future activities had been circulated ahead of the meeting. While the level of involvement from retail businesses in 2021 was considered very good, some ideas were offered for further organisational boosts in 2022. Preferred dates for Fiver Fests in 2022 were identified as March / April and October. It was agreed that this should be included in the proposed member consultation / questionnaire. **Action:** Jane – include in questionnaire.

9: Axminster Eats

A summary of a commercial proposal from Unique Boutique Events to run a street food market in Axminster on a monthly basis from the summer of 2022 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Chamber's view and potential support was sought by Eleanor Carr who runs the business and already operates such events in Seaton and Sidmouth. The management committee saw benefits for the community from an event that would bring foods not currently available locally and attract others to come to Axminster from a wider area. While a site has not yet been identified, the possible closure of Trinity Square was questioned as a potential move towards long-term pedestrianisation. Members agreed that the reaction of other food traders needed to be assessed. **Action:** Barrie – include consultation in planned new Facebook group for members.

10: Next meeting

Monday 21 February 7pm at Bowes Brooks Accountants

Signed as a correct record:

..... (Chair)

Date