

# Axminster Chamber of Commerce

## Management Committee - Monday 21 November 2022

at the George Hotel

**Present:** Jane Rockett (Chair), Karen Hussey, (Vice Chair), Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Eleanor Goddard, Alison Hayward, Jan Rowe, Emma Rowe, Mark Dowdeswell, Karen Dowdeswell, Gemma Moore, Colin Hayward (Axminster Community Shed).

## Minutes

(Draft until approved at next meeting)

### 1. Apologies

Pippa Galvin, Adrian Lausch, Sarah Marsh-Collings, Jason Murrell, Jess Brooks (Treasurer), Steve Holt (Axminster Town Council)

### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the Management Committee held on 17 October 2022 were approved as a correct record. **Proposed:** Karen **Seconded** Jan

### 3. Matters arising

#### (a) Business rates

Exchanges are continuing with EDDC with a view to finding a date for the promised meeting, hopefully with involvement from the Local Valuation Office.

**Action:** Barrie

#### (b) Lloyds Bank closure

With Lloyds now having closed, concerns have been heightened regarding the availability of cash in the town centre. Barrie is continuing to press the Shared Banking Hub organisation for further details on their promised local hub. He is also in touch with the Link network to see if they can help.

**Action:** Barrie

#### (c) Axminster Renewal Forum

The consultants' final report has now been produced and circulated to participants. Jane will arrange for a copy to be circulated with these minutes.

**Action:** Jane

#### (d) Food event for Axminster

Eat Festivals have provided further information regarding the 'Axminster Gate to Plate' event planned for 7 October 2023. They have sought permission from the Lord of the Manor to operate and have received a provisional 'yes'. They are awaiting a response from the PCC regarding use of the Minster Green. Symonds & Sampson have been asked if they would like to be signage partners. Applications for stalls are now open at [www.eatfestivals.org/apply](http://www.eatfestivals.org/apply). Information will be circulated via Chamber channels to encourage trader involvement.

**Action:** Barrie

### **(e) Training opportunities**

To be added to the agenda for the next meeting

**Action:** Barrie / Jane

## **4. Treasurer's report**

In Jess' absence, Alison provided balance details for the two accounts:

- Totally Locally Axminster account - £1,461.98;
- Main Chamber account: between £1,500 and £1,800.

Difficulties persist in resolving the issue of access to the main Chamber bank account. The committee discussed the matter and noted that it was extremely frustrating not being able to access the bank account in question and that not knowing the exact balance could hamper future Chamber activities. It remained, therefore, a matter of urgency.

Alison explained that Nat West have now asked for a specific Management Committee minute confirming the change of signatories. It was agreed that the previous signatories Shane Morgan (Chair) and Joy Raymond (Secretary), who are no longer officers of the Chamber, should now be removed as signatories to the bank accounts. They further agreed that they should be replaced as signatories by Jane Rockett, (Chair), Karen Hussey (Vice Chair), Jess Brooks (Treasurer) and Barrie Hedges (Secretary).

**Proposed:** Jan Rowe **Seconded:** Alison Hayward - and agreed unanimously by all present

**Action:** Barrie, Alison and officers

## **5. Correspondence**

### **Events in Trinity Square**

Jane had asked EDDC for clarification re trading in the Square under the Market Charter held by Mr Jim Rowe as Lord of the Manor. They supplied a copy of the Charter. Briefly, it shows that under the Charter there is a right to hold a weekly market (once every 7 days) plus an annual eight-day Fair. Based on this, the weekly Thursday market and the Cherry Fayre are exempt from needing Street Trading consent by legislation. Any other trading event that takes place in Axminster on other days and on public land will need street trading consent to cover trading units/stalls. An individual trader can apply for consent but if more than one stall is at an event then Chamber would need to apply, listing all the stall holders in one document. This needs to be secured three months before an event. There is currently no charge, but this may change. To do anything on the Church Green negates the need for a trading license but requires permission from Axminster PCC, again requiring notice as it has to be approved at meetings.

### **Car parking discount**

EDDC also clarified that the parking offer in its car parks this winter is £2 all day and a day ticket can be used across all EDDC car parks.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

Jane had been asked to lay a wreath on behalf of Chamber at Remembrance service, which she subsequently did.

## **6. Axminster Town Council report**

Steve provided a written report which Barrie read through. It will be circulated with the minutes.

## **7. Chamber Christmas events**

Details were provided of the efforts being made by the Chamber to boost town centre footfall in December following the switching on of the town's lights on 26 November. Barrie has been working with Waffle to bring about the return of the Christmas grotto at Trinity House and plans are in place for that between 13 and 17 December, with Santa "going mobile" the following week to deliver presents to disabled and sick children at their homes in Axminster. The Chamber will seek sponsorship from businesses while agreeing to underwrite as necessary up to £500.

Jane is continuing to liaise with other town groups and businesses to put in place other events on each of the Saturdays in December, including Edward Jacobs bringing the Axe Valley Community Choir to the church door (with piano) for carols on the 10th. The Lions have agreed to have their Santa on his sleigh in the Square on each of the Saturdays. The church has its tree festival on the 17th. Jane has also initiated the Totally Locally Axminster Xmas Trail which will run from light-up night through until Christmas Eve using the successful format employed previously.

**Action:** Jane / Barrie

## **8. Networking events**

The response to the Chamber newsletter inviting interest in breakfast networking events showed a fair level of interest and some helpful ideas on the styling of such events. As Andy has previously led on the subject, it was agreed that further discussion should be delayed until the next meeting at which point a plan of action would be put in place.

**Action:** Andy

## **9. Shop local campaign**

Totally Locally Axminster's current 'Big Deal for Axminster' campaign has attracted over 30 participating retailers and has been well received on social media. Sarah has joined Barrie in running the social media campaign and provided analysis of the facebook data which showed an increase in reach of 54% since the campaign began in October (total reach 10,748) and an increase in reach over the previous 90 days of 251% (total 13,400). The post re the Castle Inn reached 5,400 people and had 57 reactions and 8 shares. The challenge remains to persuade more retailers to 'like' and 'share' posts re other businesses.

## **10. Membership campaign for 2023**

Barrie explained that after a full year of free membership, the value of the Chamber's work has been well proven. With a new financial year beginning in February, it is now crucial that as many businesses as possible are persuaded to pay the flat £50 membership fee for 2023. To be effective, this will require hands-on involvement from committee members. He will draft an approach for discussion at the next meeting.

**Action:** Barrie

## **11. Business directory**

Adrian had provided stats showing hits on the new [www.axminster.biz](http://www.axminster.biz) website which has attracted 70 participating businesses since September. Since 13 September the site has had 2,500 page views from some 411 individuals. The most popular page views has been Totally Kids, Bowes Brooks, Yummy Filipino Food and Love's Furniture Restorations, The Tiffin Box and Axminster Jewellers. The capabilities of the site have been boosted with the addition of tagging as a facility. It will help further if more businesses link to the site from their own media.

## **12. Any other business**

None

## **13. Date of next meeting**

Monday 16 January 2023 (please note)