

# Axminster Chamber of Commerce

## Minutes of Management Committee meeting

(Draft until approved at next meeting)

Held at the offices of Bowes Brooks on Monday 21 February 2022

**Present:** Jane Rockett (acting Chair), Jess Brooks (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (acting Secretary), Alison Hayward, Naomi Eden, Adrian Lausch

**Apologies:** Annette Heath-Coleman, Karen Hussey, Steve Holt (Axminster Town Council representative)

**1: Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022 were approved (proposed by Jess and seconded by Alison).

### 2: Matters arising:

- (a) Action in Axminster – awaiting advice
- (b) Planning for Christmas 2022 – Cindy has provided preliminary information not just on Christmas plans (focused on Church Street and Silver Street) but on potential Chamber input to other events including the Raising of the Glove (1 July), the Cherry Fayre (23 June) and the the Big Dinner that follows. **Action:** Further discussion on specific activity for Xmas 22 to take place at April meeting. Dialogue to be maintained on other events.
- (c) Plastic Free Axminster – offered inclusion of newsletter item / facebook group post
- (d) Bank account access – all signatories now in place
- (e) Consultation on planning issues – Axminster Town Council had responded positively on request for Chamber to be consulted on key issues affecting businesses. Council had enthusiastically welcomed resurrection of Chamber.

### 3: Correspondence

ARC has asked Chamber to assist in encouraging local businesses to involve staff in its planned charity walk for 2022. More details to follow.

### 4: Chamber relaunch programme

Management committee members viewed the emerging website, newsletter and businesses questionnaire and commented positively.

#### Action:

- Adrian / Barrie will complete the website and update the accompanying business directory and WebCollect pages ready for launch on 8 March.
- Barrie will circulate a link to the test site for detailed comment.
- From 8 March Jane will begin emailing all businesses for whom we have contact details urging them to join and providing a link to the website.
- Adrian / Jess will reconcile existing contacts database into one new one.
- The committee will apportion localised membership drive responsibilities at the next meeting.

## 5: Axminster Regeneration

Jane and Barrie provided an update on a recent EDDC Zoom meeting at which views were gathered from councillors and other business representatives for the '**Axe Valley Project**'. They explained that consultants have been engaged to undertake feasibility studies for 'placemaking' projects in the Axe Valley and prepare a report on options for different sites in public or private ownership (eg the former Websters Garage site). This would then inform bids for capital funding such as the 'Levelling Up Fund' in the spring of 2022.

Meanwhile, Chamber / Totally Locally Axminster had also in recent months contributed to the Devon CC '**Coastal and Market Towns Project**'. Axminster was one of eight 'underperforming' Devon towns selected in a pilot project for future investment. The next stage will involve the towns preparing a regeneration strategy and making business cases. It will also identify quick win projects. A consultant is being lined up to drive this.

## 6: Treasurer's Report

Nothing new to report since last meeting. Barrie advised that a £1,000 grant from the East Devon AONB towards the banners project should arrive in the Totally Locally Axminster account in a few days.

## 7: Axminster Town Council report

Nothing to report this month beyond what is covered elsewhere

## 8: Totally Locally Axminster update

- (a) **Street Banners Project** – Barrie provided an update on the various aspects of the project. Some 20 banners are planned using existing Xmas tree brackets in West Street / Trinity Square as the first stage of a potential longer term scheme. Work on stitching the fabric and designing the banners was going well. Consideration still being given to brackets / poles and to Conservation Officer liaison. A leaflet will be produced to explain each banner.
- (b) **Events** – On balance it was felt that participation in a national 'Fiver Fest' in March was impractical. Discussion centred on coming up with a different style of retail loyalty event(s) built around other Axminster celebrations such as an Easter Trail, the Cherry Fayre and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This might include a shop windows competition.

**Action:** Jane to set up a small retailers' working group to develop ideas and report back

- (c) **Shoppers and Visitors Map** – Barrie outlined an approach from Axminster Town Council who were interested in using the existing Totally Locally Axminster map as the basis for an extended and enlarged map with a revised numbering system. The new map would be displayed at several key points around the town and would also be available in fold-down size. Members agreed to the use of the existing design but asked that its integrity be retained and that Chamber have an opportunity to comment at preliminary design and artwork stage. Given that the new map may not be available by the summer of 2022, it was agreed that all remaining copies of the existing map should be made available and consideration given to whatever immediate updates are needed / reprinting. Adrian suggested that a digitised interactive version of the new map might be considered which could be searched on websites.

**Action:**

- Barrie – liaise and assist ATC where needed (including digital suggestion)
- Jane – circulate remaining maps to traders
- Jane / Barrie cost possible update and reprint

**9: Axe Vale Show update**

**Action:** Jane / Karen to report at next meeting

**10: Axminster Eats**

Barrie provided an update on conversations with Eleanor Carr re her proposals for an ‘Axminster Events’ street food event. He had agreed with her that the appropriate way forward was for her to seek preliminary approval for her preferred Minster Green site. She was in contact with the Vicar. It had also been suggested that she might consider an indoor event utilising the Guildhall. Caution was expressed about the feelings of existing food traders.

**11: Axminster Business Awards**

Some concern was raised about the Marketing West structure and judging arrangements for the 2021 awards (staged in January). Agreed that further consideration on any Chamber / Totally Locally Axminster involvement in 2022 awards should await further information from the organiser.

**12: Management Committee membership**

Barrie proposed / Jane seconded an invitation to Adrian to be coopted to the committee which he accepted. Other cooptions to be considered to maintain numbers.

**13: Next meeting**

Monday 21 March 2022 at Bowes Brooks at 6.30pm (please diary the date)

Signed as a correct record:

..... (Chair)

Date .....