

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 March 2022

Present: Jane Rockett (acting Chair), Karen Hussey (acting Deputy Chair), Jess Brooks (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (acting Secretary), Naomi Eden, Adrian Lausch, Pippa Galvin

1: Apologies: Annette Heath-Coleman, Aneesa California, Alison Hayward, Emma Rowe, Jan Rowe, Steve Holt (Axminster Town Council representative)

2: Minutes

The minutes of the Management Committee held on 21 February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

3: Matters arising

(a) **Action in Axminster** – agreed that while the work done to date by Action in Axminster has been invaluable, the return of the Chamber and the advances being made by Axminster Town Council means that it no longer has a separate role.

(b) **Axminster Eats** – Eleanor Carr of Unique Boutique Events has confirmed that she will be run a series of street food events based at the Guildhall car park on the fourth Fridays in June, July, and August.

(c) **Axminster Business Awards** – no further action needed until Marketing West indicates its plans for a further event.

(d) **Management Committee membership** – It was noted that several willing Chamber participants were often unable to make meetings and agreed that should not be a barrier to close involvement.

4: Correspondence

Email received from Kate Ridout of Axminster Children's Community Art urging the Chamber to support the introduction of a wider range of arts events. The committee was supportive in principle and will consider what it can lend to such events as they come forward.

5: Chamber relaunch programme

Barrie reported that the launch via social media and via a large feature in the *Midweek Herald* had been well received. Comments on the new website with its link to the Axminster Business Guide and Chamber newsletter had been positive with Cllr Steve Holt describing it as 'fabulous'. It was now important to move on to drive the membership campaign.

Pippa urged the committee to think further about the impact even the modest membership fees proposed would have on small traders at a hugely difficult time. After discussion it was agreed that,

with Chamber funds currently healthy, all membership fees should be waived for the financial year starting on 1 April and use the opportunity through the coming year to demonstrate the value of its contribution to business life in town.

Adrian reported that he had already brought together existing databases onto one Google platform that could be shared as appropriate. Once updated with best available information, he proposed using it as the basis for a MailChimp electronic newsletter which would facilitate a flow of information to members without the time consuming layout time needed for a physical format.

Agreed that Adrian will put all the necessary elements in place before Jane begins emailing businesses.

6: Axminster Town Council report

Cllr Steve Holt was not able to be present but reported:

- Town Council support for the Banners project. Following Pippa's presentation to the Operations Committee funding of £2,500 had been committed.
- Shoppers & Visitors Map – Axminster Town Council has now commissioned Delphine Jones to prepare the enlarged map with updated key. In the meantime, we have over 1,000 copies of the existing folded map which will be made available.
Action: Naomi agreed to act as a central contact for other traders to draw maps.
- Impatience had been expressed by a trader at a recent TC meeting that the Council and Chamber were not providing greater support. He explained the work underway from both bodies. Good ongoing communication was, he said, important.
- In general, the TC wish to support the Chamber in creating an engaged community across all industrial, retail and domestic elements of our community.
{Also see map item below}

7: Issues

Concerns were expressed about the impact of empty shops and about the recent closure of River Cottage Canteen. There were concerns also about the impact on the town from recent littering and problems at Miltons Yard. It is understood that moves are in hand to deal with the latter.

Action: Jane to contact Palmers to see if positive use of the empty River Cottage windows might be possible while the building remains empty. Barrie to contact ATC / EDDC to see what further actions / initiatives might be possible to tackle littering.

Jane gave details of the huge hike in energy prices her business was facing. This would inevitably permeate through to other businesses as their current energy deals end.

Action: Barrie to draft letter of concern for Jane to send to Neil Parish

8: Totally Locally Axminster update

(a) **Banners project** – progressing well though we have ground to make up on banner designs. A new volunteer (Chris Parker-Sales) who has engineering experience has take on the logistical side of getting new brackets made. Light Up Axminster’s team will fit.

(b) **Retailers initiatives** – Jane reported on last week’s meeting of retailers to discuss a variety of initiatives around Easter, the Jubilee, the Cherry Fayre and Christmas. (see separate notes).

Action: Jane and Barrie to meet to review, plan and apportion actions

(c) **Promotional videos** – Barrie outlined an idea to create a simple audio visual that could run on the Waffle screen but also on social media to encourage viewers to take a close look at all Axminster’s retail and hospitality businesses. Waffle are enthusiastic and will help as necessary though some funding may be needed.

Action: Barrie to develop

9: Treasurer’s report

Jess reported that while the necessary forms have now been submitted, we don’t yet have full access to operate the Chamber bank account. She is expecting to hear from the bank shortly. Meanwhile, the Totally Locally Axminster bank account is £6,572.20 in credit, with £2,500 due from Axminster Town Council re the banners project.

11: Next meeting

It was agreed that, with plenty to action, there was no need for an April meeting.

Action: Jane / Barrie will set a date for the May management committee meeting and also for the AGM.

Signed as a correct record:

..... (Chair)

Date