

Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Management Committee - Monday 18 March 2024

at Axminster Carpets, Woodmead Road (boardroom)

Present: Jane Rockett (Chair), Alison Hayward (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Miranda Woodman, Colin Hayward, Mark Dowdeswell, Paul Hayward, Kara Burrough (guest), Eleanor Carr (guest)

Minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Karen Hussey, Jan Rowe, Matt McCauley, Karen Dowdeswell, Chessie Dowdeswell

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Mark; **Seconded:** Colin

3. Matters arising

- (a) **Light Up Axminster** - Kara Burrough joined us to outline Light Up Axminster plans for the year including the Cherry Fayre starting 20 June culminated in the Big Dinner on the 28th. A full programme was being put together and businesses would be contacted to advertise. New bunting was needed and would be made at Pippins. Christmas Lights would be switched on on 23 November. Plans this year include a big light across the road which would add weight to the need for fund raising.
- (b) **Chamber logo** - the new Chamber logo had been successfully introduced.
- (c) **Training initiatives** - Jane reported that dates were being sought in May / June for a further round of training sessions. **Action:** Jane
- (d) **Model railway project** - Barrie advised that a decision was awaited on a grant that would support plans for additional activities in the months ahead. **Action:** Barrie

4. Correspondence

Jane reported that we had been advised of planned changes to the Axminster Renewal Forum which would be officer led at EDDC. Full details were awaited.

5. Finance & memberships

(a) **Update on finances** - Alison provided an update showing a surplus of £904.32 for the current accounting year to 31 March 2024. The total at the bank is £4,252.97, with £1,709.96 ring fenced for the banners and a debit of £157.11 for the model railway.

(b) **Update on memberships** - Barrie reported a steady stream of automated membership renewals via Stripe and a new sign up from Mole Avon (Axminster). Alison will be issuing invoices to current members who have opted to pay by BACS as their renewals become due. Total memberships still over 50 despite a couple of losses due to closure.

6. Key Chamber roles

Jane reported contact with one candidate who might be willing to take on the minutes element of the Secretary role - she was pursuing. Meanwhile, Alison has a contact who she was hopeful would assist with marketing / social media. Both to be pursued.

Action: Jane / Alison

7. Axminster Town Council report

Councillor Mark Dowdeswell reported on recent ATC activity including:

- * Flooding issues debated at the Annual Parish Meeting including the need for an emergency plan.
- * Controversy over the new precept
- * A recent co-option bringing the council back to full strength
- * Plans for some 500 homes between Hunters Lodge and the Musbury Road
- * Events planned to celebrate D-Day
- * Electric bikes back on the agenda
- * Vandalism of the community orchard.

8. 'Axminster Gate to Plate' 2024

Members discussed the two substantial food events on and around the Minster Green either end of the Spring Bank Holiday weekend - the first Axminster Eats street food market of the summer on 24 May and Axminster Gate to Plate food festival on the 27th. She was particularly pleased to be able to stage it on the Minster Green this year and expected 500 to 600 attendees through the evening. She is to clarify the need for public toilets to be left open with the Town Clerk.

With regard to Axminster Gate to Plate, Jane had joined a Zoom meeting at which details were explained. A discussion took place covering:

- Whom Gate to Plate might approach locally to attend – several contacts were shared
- Advertising in local newsletters and poster distribution
- Cleaning the Minster between Axminster Eats and Gate to Plate
- Pippins would be involved from the Church Rooms in the distribution of waste food after the event

- Gate to Plate thought we should do a voucher booklet to encourage sales after the event

The Chamber has been given a free pitch and needs to finalise its plans for involvement. Barrie will ensure that the street banners are in place.

Action: Jane

9. Axminster Scarecrow Trail

The Scarecrow Trail was being launched via social media / Midweek Herald as an event that would help to create atmosphere in the two weeks running up to Axminster Gate to Plate. Alison is coordinating.

Action: Alison

10. Axminster Map

The committee discussed the benefits of organising a reprint of the town map in its folded down pocket format so that it could once again be given out by businesses. Given the tourist info carried on the reverse, this could also satisfy the need for an update of a long outdated 'Visit Axminster' leaflet issued from the Heritage Centre. Paul advised that Axminster Town Council would be looking at updating the content of the map face during the next year and ultimately looking at a simpler format. Barrie will assess costs and report back.

Action: Barrie

11. Annual General Meeting

Barrie had spoken to Ana at the Azura Tapas who would be delighted to host the AGM on Monday 20 May and to provide refreshments. Alison will talk to her further re the specifics of the food and cost. The full format of the AGM to be discussed at the April meeting.

Action: Alison / Barrie

12. Date of next meeting

Monday 15th April 2024 - Axminster Tools - 6.30pm