

# Axminster Chamber of Commerce

## Management Committee - Monday 20 March 2023

at The Cow and the Bean

**Present:** Jane Rockett (Chair), Karen Hussey (Vice Chair), Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Alison Hayward, Karen Dowdeswell, Mark Dowdesdwell, Gemma Moore, Becky Lippett, Ella Tarratt

## Minutes

(Draft until approved at next meeting)

### 1. Apologies

Jess Brooks, Steve Holt (Axminster Town Council), Jan Rowe, Pippa Galvin, Colin Hayward (Axminster Community Shed).

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the Management Committee held on 20 February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

**Proposed:** Ella Tarratt **Seconded:** Karen Dowdeswell

### 3. Matters arising

#### (a) Business rates

Given the difficulty in finding an all-round suitable date for a meeting with the EDDC Business Rates Team and in finding sufficient members to participate, it was agreed that we should suggest putting the necessary guidance into a future newsletter.

**Action:** Barrie

#### (b) Shared banking hub

While no further updates on timing had been provided, Richard Foord MP had now contacted Barrie to discuss. It was also agreed that the cash point now available in the Axe Convenience Store needed greater awareness.

#### (c) Christmas Grotto costs

It was agreed that the Chamber should fulfil its original offer to contribute £500 towards the costs of the Community Waffle House's Christmas grotto. Jane will check what amount remains outstanding and discuss with Sophie.

**Action:** Jane

**(d) Axminster Gate to Plate**

Barrie summarised the details now provided by *eat: Festivals* re the Axminster Gate to Plate event planned for 7 October. This will be relayed to members via the imminent issue of the Chamber newsletter. It was also agreed that the Chamber will now start to look at ways in which it can support the event via other activities in the town over that weekend.

**(e) Meeting with Seaton Chamber of Commerce**

A group of three members of the Seaton Chamber will attend the next meeting to discuss possible areas of cooperation.

**(f) Coronation bunting**

Barrie reported that the Crafters @the Shed group were making good progress with the coronation bunting funded by Chamber. It was agreed that Jane would ask Axminster Rotary Club for an update on their town decoration plans so that the bunting could be used to best effect in the appropriate places. Members will be encouraged to decorate their windows for the event.

**Action:** Jane

**(f) Shared tourism initiative**

Barrie provided an update re our approach to Axminster Town Council which had been unable to consider to date. With the council now going into election mode, he felt it was worth delaying further consideration until the summer with a view to having something in place for 2024.

**Action:** Barrie

**4. Treasurer's report**

With the majority of the banking issues overcome, Alison was able to report balances as follows:

Current account - £455.45

Nat West reserve account - £1,653.80

Tide account - £1,585.43

It had been agreed that once the remaining issues have been resolved the Tide account should be absorbed into the main account, though money originally donated for Totally Locally projects should be ring fenced. Online banking is still being arranged.

**Action:** Alison / Jane

**5. Correspondence**

Barrie reported that both Sarah Marsh-Cummings and Andy Richardson had with regret decided to stand down from the committee. Sarah has moved home and Andy cited pressure of other commitments. Our regret and thanks have been expressed.

Jane reported on the recent EDDC consultation with regard to street trading and had clarified the market trading arrangements. These were noted for future use. She had also asked that adequate time be allowed in council consultations for Chamber members to be circulated.

## **5. Membership sign-up, update and strategy**

To date, some 22 businesses had signed up to membership for the financial year to 31 January 2024. Jane will write to those who have joined to welcome them. She and Barrie will approach other businesses who have taken space on the Axminster Business Directory to encourage them to now join. It was agreed that businesses would be allowed to maintain the premium style with photos until the AGM at which point those who have not paid membership would revert to basic lineage entries.

**Action:** Jane / Barrie

## **6. Financial strategy**

Barrie outlined his plans for a Crowd Funding exercise to support the banners project and emphasised that the Chamber would need to consider how it could raise funds for this and other initiatives it wants to progress as subscriptions would probably not cover an ambitious programme. It had been suggested at a recent EDDC grants drop-in session that the Chamber would need to seek charitable status in order to be able to apply for many grants but there was concern for the amount of work involved.

**Action:** Barrie

## **7. Axminster Town Council report**

No report this month due to Steve Holt's inability to attend. Members of the committee wished Steve a speedy recovery.

## **8. Easter Trail**

Jane detailed her efforts in progressing plans for an Easter Trail from 4 to 14 April. The event will be promoted in the forthcoming Chamber newsletter. Other ideas were considered for potential initiatives through the year including Christmas wreath making.

**Action:** Jane

## **9. Training initiative**

In Steve Holt's absence it was agreed that discussion of this item should be delayed.

## **10. Networking sessions**

The issue of introducing business breakfasts and wider networking events was revisited. It was agreed that business breakfasts would be a potentially valuable medium for commercial members in particular but that the way in which they would be staged and funded needed careful consideration. Karen agreed to approach Westcotts to see if they might be prepared to drive it. The committee is mindful also of the valuable ideas input by Steve Holt and it is hoped he will be able to engage as the idea goes forward.

**Action: Karen**

## **11. Banners 2023 and 2024**

Barrie provided an update on the work of the Banners Group in further developing last year's successful display, with a total of 26 banners planned in 2023 and potentially 36 in 2024. While work is well underway, the issue of funding had still to be considered and he proposed a Crowd Funder with a target of up to £2,000 as the best route at a time when public money is limited. He will progress.

**Action: Barrie**

## **12. Axe Vale Show**

The Chamber's participation in the show was discussed. It was agreed that gaining meaningful benefit from hiring a small marquee to hand out leaflets was limited and the time involved for a few people was considerable. It was agreed that while the matter be kept under review, no immediate action would be taken with regard to a marquee.

## **13. Meeting with Axe Vale Academy**

Jane gave details of her highly positive meeting with Laura Jenkins, Head of the Axe Vale Academy to consider ways in which we might work with them and they could in turn engage more closely with the community. Amongst ideas under consideration is businesses being able to advertise in the Academy's parent newsletter and other communications. Businesses will be invited to have a stall at the Academy's spring / Christmas events. The school is also keen to participate in the banners project.

**Action: Jane / Barrie**

## **14. Any other business**

The committee discussed arrangements for the AGM at the Bradshaw Room, Axminster Heritage Centre on Monday 22 May at 6.30pm. It was agreed that we need to identify speakers who can make the non-business part of the evening interesting. We also need to

consider providing food. Barrie identified two potential speakers and a third was suggested who will now be approached. Jane will approach a Chamber member re catering.

**Action:** Barrie / Jane

## **15. Date of next meeting**

Monday 17 April 2023, The Tiffin Box, 6.30pm