

# Axminster Chamber of Commerce

**Management Committee - Monday 15 April 2024 - 6.30pm**

at Axminster Tools, Weycroft Avenue, Axminster EX13 5PH

**Present:** Jane Rockett (Chair), Alison Hayward (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (Secretary),  
Matt McAuley, Mark Dowdeswell, Sandie Draper, Colin Hayward, Sarah Hunt

## Minutes

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Karen Hussey, Miranda Woodman, Karen Dowdeswell, Francesca Dowdeswell, Gemma Moore

### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2024 were approved as a correct record.

**Proposed:** Mark **Seconded:** Colin

### 3. Matters arising

Covered elsewhere

### 4. Correspondence

Jane referred to an email received from East Devon District Council in relation to the re-constitution of the Axminster Renewal Forum. It is proposed that the Forum becomes an officer-led group with the involvement of members of the district and town councils and with representation at meetings from both Axminster and Seaton Chambers. Given confusion over the exact state of play in relation to Axminster projects it was agreed that Barrie should write to EDDC asking for a short summary so that the extent of the Chamber's future involvement could be assessed.

**Action:** Barrie

## 5. Finance & membership

- (a) **Update on finances** - Alison provided an update showing a surplus for the year to 15 March 2024 of £904.32 with a balance of £4,252.97 across the two bank accounts. The amount ring fenced for the banners is £1,709.96, while the model railway currently shows a debit of £157.11.
- (b) **Update on memberships** - Barrie provided an update on new memberships, which included Mole Avon Country Stores and OneFour Productions (video). The steady succession of membership renewals from the automated Stripe system remained positive and Alison was issuing invoices to those who had previously paid by BACS or cash as they came due. A number of membership candidates were identified for pursuit by individual members of the committee. **Action:** All

## 6. 'Axminster Gate to Plate' 2024 / Axminster Eats

Jane reminded the committee of her report to the last meeting re a Zoom call in which she had participated with Axminster Town Council plus eat Festivals. Advice had been given to the eat Festivals team on how to best promote the event across the wider area including villages and via leaflets / posters.

The Chamber had been given a free pitch and decisions now need to be made about how best to utilise it. Axminster Tools had kindly agreed to make a gazebo available and to provide boards on which photos from the Axminster Scarecrow Trail could be displayed, with members on hand to chat to the public.

**Action:** Jane (coordinate); Alison (Scarecrow Trail element inc blow-up photos); Barrie (publicity inc newsletter); Matt (gazebo and display panels); Colin (erection of gazebo).

## 7. Axminster Scarecrow Trail

Barrie provided an update. To date some 42 scarecrows had been registered as being built, of which 30 were from community entrants. Further effort was needed to persuade more businesses to participate. Barrie will continue to post, while Alison will coordinate, and committee members will generally encourage others to support the initiative

**Action:** Alison / Barrie / All

## 8. Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Azura Tapas in Miltons Yard on Monday 20 May from 6.30 pm. Ana Carvalho has agreed to provide food at a cost of £80 and will speak to Barrie re the detail. Discussion focused on the content of the meeting beyond the usual annual routines of reports and officer elections. Discussion focused in particular on two subjects that could potentially be offered for discussion by the wider membership:

1 What more can be done to boost Axminster's economy?

2 Would further non-food, indoor or outdoor markets on Saturdays / Sundays be of value and how could they be achieved?

Barrie and Jane will explore further and assess the potential to invite speakers willing to participate. A newsletter will be produced as an invitation medium for the AGM together with social media posts.

**Action:** Barrie / Jane

## **9. 'Visit Axminster' leaflet + town map**

Barrie reminded the committee of the discussion at the last meeting re the potential to re-print the full-folded down, double-sided version of the Town Map as originally instigated by Totally Locally Axminster. This would have the benefit of bringing a lot more tourist related information into play on the reverse side. A preliminary estimate of design and print costs showed that a budget of around £1,600 would be needed to produce 2,000 copies. As per the discussion at the last meeting, there may be some potential for this to be funded or part-funded by EDDC. Barrie will write to Paul Hayward and copy Mark Dowdeswell to assess what potential there was to proceed.

**Action:** Barrie

## **10. Axminster Town Council report**

Councillor Mark Dowdeswell had nothing further to report as the council had not met since our own last meeting.

## **11. Training initiatives**

Jane outlined two further sessions on offer to us from Cosmic: 'Google My Business' on 16 May; and 'SEO' on 29 May. Both will be of the one-to-one mentoring variety rather than classroom group training sessions. It was agreed that Jane (plus one other as appropriate) should participate in the Google session and Chessie Dowdeswell should be asked if she would participate in the SEO session. In both cases, info should subsequently be provided that can be circulated to other members via a newsletter.

**Action:** Jane / Chessie

## **12. Model railway**

Barrie provided an update. He had been advised by Palmers' representative that they had received a series of visits by an insurance company assessor in relation to empty properties. One of these suggested that there could potentially be a fire risk from the model loco running at the former River Cottage. While he had subsequently provided detailed technical information showing the fire prevention built into the controller, the insurance company would not be budged from their view and so the model remained static. While disappointing, this was being treated by the volunteers running the project as an opportunity to establish a longer term home for the model where a variety of bolt-on sub-projects would be possible. The committee agreed his plan to launch a Crowdfunding appeal to raise the necessary funds.

**Action:** Barrie

### **13. Any other business**

Sarah Hunt was introduced to the committee as a volunteer willing to contribute on the marketing and social media front. She outlined her experience and it was evident that she would be a valuable asset to our work. Initially, Barrie will meet Sarah to brief her on current marketing from which she can suggest a way forward.

**Action:** Sarah / Barrie

Barrie provided details of Ric Edgell's new video production business OneFour Productions and said that there was a golden opportunity to commission a quality promo video at very modest cost that could be used on Chamber media and beyond. Agreement was given to seeking a more detailed outline of what was proposed for the June meeting.

**Action:** Barrie

### **14. Date of next meeting**

AGM - Monday 20th May - Azura Tapas, Miltons Yard, Axminster