



Annual General Meeting - Monday 20 May 2024 at 6.30 pm at Azura Tapas, Milton's Yard, Axminster

Present: Leigh Conley (Axminster Guildhall), Francesca Dowdeswell (Swish & Flick), Mark Dowdeswell (Swish & Flick), Dr Sugendran Govender (Stamford House Dental Practice), Alison Hayward (Axminster Property - Treasurer), Paul Hayward (Axminster Town Council and East Devon District Council), Barrie Hedges (Archway Bookshop - Secretary), Sarah Hunt, Karen Hussey (WG Potter - Vice Chair), Sarah Jackson (East Devon District Council), John McFadzean (Axminster Community Shed), Suzie McFadzean (Suzie McFadzean Photography), Kay Pike (Plastic Free Axminster), Claire Ranyard (Jurassic Glamping), Kate Ridout (Earlybird Graphics), Jane Rockett (Axminster Printing - Chair),

Minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Adrian Lausch, Nigel Sadler, Colin Hayward, Karen Dowdeswell, Michael Bolton, Fred Wells, Fiona Ke Remington, Tony Benger, Barry Searle, Steve Holt, Amanda Hodenn, Cindy Vining, John Jeffery, Jill Farrow.

2. Minutes - the minutes of the last AGM held 22 May 2023 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters arising - None

4. Chairman's report - Jane Rockett

The full Chairman's report is attached as a separate document. Jane Rockett also thanked the retiring secretary, Barrie Hedges for his contribution and made a presentation To him on behalf of the Chamber.

5. Treasurer's report - Alison Hayward

The full Treasurer's report is attached as a separate document. It showed a surplus of £786 compared to an deficit of £5,615 the previous year. The balance at 31 January 2024 was £3,348 compared with £2,562 the previous year.

6. Election of officers

The following officers were elected:

- (a) Chair - Jane Rockett (nominated by Karen Hussey, Seconded by Suzie McFadzean)
- (b) Vice Chair - Karen Hussey (nominated by Jane Rockett, Seconded by Suzie McFadzean)
- (c) Treasurer Alison Hayward (nominated by Jane Rockett, Seconded by Karen Hussey)
- (d) Secretary - Vacant
- (e) Management committee - the above plus the following elected en bloc: Sandie Draper, Mark Dowdeswell, Karen Dowdeswell, Chessie Dowdeswell, Sarah Hunt, Matt McCauley. Other previous members who were not present will be contacted to assess whether they wish to continue on a coopted basis.

7. The Axminster Economy - the Challenges

In his role as Deputy Leader of East Devon District Council and Economy Portfolio holder for the authority, Cllr Paul Hayward provided an assessment of the state of the local economy and the challenges facing local government - most notably that of available funding. He said that while the challenges facing Axminster were common to other towns in the district, it suffered in particular from housing and traffic pressures and keeping commercial properties looking good. He acknowledged that development of the former Webster's Garage site was key to Axminster's future and said that background work was taking place.

8. Open forum

During an Open Forum session, those present discussed in particular the potential for markets beyond the weekly food market and comparisons were drawn with other towns that ran successful craft, vintage and other markets. The need for the town to attract tourists was also discussed and Chessie Dowdeswell gave an update on the successful 'Whats In Axminster' website www.whatsinaxminster.co.uk and its dual role in motivating the community while also attracting visitors.

9. Plastic Free Axminster

Kay Pike provided an update on the work of Plastic Free Axminster and its current drive to raise awareness of the need not to drop cigarette butts. She said that PFA was keen to further engage with businesses wanting to explore how they could reduce their use of plastics.

10. Any other business

Paul Hayward reported that Axminster now had more than 20 defibrillators, which he said was more per head than any other town in the UK. He emphasised the availability and value of free defibrillator training.