

# Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Management Committee - Monday 20 June 2022 at 6.30 pm

at the George Hotel, Axminster

Present: Jane Rockett (Chair), Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Adrian Lausch, Steve Holt (Axminster Town Council), Naomi Eden, Pippa Galvin, Jan Rowe, Sarah Marsh-Collings, Jason Marsh-Collings

## Minutes

(Draft until approved at next meeting)

### 1. Apologies

Karen Hussey (Vice Chair), Jess Brooks (Treasurer), Emma Rowe.

### 2. Minutes

Minutes of the Management Committee held on 21 March 2022 (there were no committee meetings in April or May) were approved.

Proposed: Adrian Seconded: Naomi.

### 3. Matters arising

None

### 4. Treasurer's report

Delayed until next meeting in the Treasurer's absence

### 5. Correspondence

None

### 6. Axminster Town Council report

Steve provided a report on behalf of Axminster Town Council. He highlighted the Council's efforts to persuade EDDC to use its enforcement powers to persuade the owners of buildings in a poor state of repair to deal with them. He also mentioned efforts to encourage rail users to come into the town, notably through a 'Rail Ale Trail'. Steve's full report is attached.

Discussion followed on the plans to establish a regeneration board for the town. An update will be sought for the next meeting.

**Action:** Barrie

### 7. Projects update:

(a) **Banners** – ten banners are now in place with more to follow. They have been enthusiastically received. Pippa outlined the thinking for future stages including involvement for local schools in designing banners. A new painting location has been secured at the George Hotel to allow the Axminster Community Shed to regain full use of its premises.

- (b) **Community benches** – six benches have been returned to the Minster Green for the summer. Three that will not be needed there have been loaned to the Town Council for use at Jubilee Field. Two replacement parasols are needed following wind damage.
- (c) **'Building Resilience'** – Chamber's initiative to support traders dealing with stress-related issues was well received, with a full-house 12 participants for an evening event over two weeks. The response highlighted a need for networking events at which members can discuss issues (see separate agenda item).
- (d) **Jubilee Shop Windows competition** – Jane thanked all the businesses that had taken part and said that it had boosted the appearance of the town. The winner was Ganesha Wholefoods
- (e) **Axe Vale Show** – Jane reported on the Chamber's involvement in the show, with some 150 packs distributed carrying promotional and money-off materials from members and others. Plans were discussed to further boost the stand for future years.

## 8. Business directory and shoppers map

The need for an effective digital business directory that could also appear in printed form was highlighted at the AGM. Adrian outlined ideas to fulfil the need and presented a dummy he had prepared using an open source directory from Bubble. Barrie explained that the digital gathering and regular updating of information would then make possible a printed directory. The overall directory could be a key element of the Chamber's service to its members and a valuable bonding mechanism.

Committee members welcomed the initiative and it was agreed that Barrie and Adrian should develop the ideas further, including meeting with Jess to agree how the cost of the service could potentially be incorporated into the membership fees chargeable from April 2023.

**Action:** Adrian / Barrie / Jess

In tandem with the directory discussion, members asked about the future of the Totally Locally Axminster Shoppers & Visitors Map now that the current print run is nearing exhaustion. The Town Council is currently updating the traders listed on the map and then has plans to re-print it, with several large copies on display around the town. While welcoming that initiative, the management committee felt that it was important that a map expressly for shoppers and visitors should be retained (from ATC or separately from Totally Locally Axminster) rather than one identifying all types of businesses. The content of the ATC map to be clarified with Steve and also a request made that the QR code for the new directory be shown.

**Action:** Barrie

## 9. Develop plans for 'shop local' campaign

It was agreed that, given the recent decline in town centre footfall, there was a need for a 'shop local' initiative later this year. There was a feeling that the concept of the 'Fiver Fest' no longer worked as well and that many traders found it difficult to produce good value offers for £5. It was agreed that a working group should be established to come up with recommendations. The group to consist of Naomi, Pippa, Annette (Acorn), Lisa (Red & Ginger), Sarah (Marsh-Collings) plus a Swish & Flick representative. Jane will circulate contact details to set the ball rolling.

**Action:** Jane / Naomi / Pippa

## **10.Membership campaign**

Consideration of how best to operate the membership campaign will be tied into the plans for the business directory as a key member benefit.

## **11.Volunteer appeal**

Jane stressed that the Chamber's initiatives need volunteer support in order to avoid too much weight on too few shoulders (and legs!). Consideration will be given to dividing member targets into areas that are assigned to individuals.

**Action:** Jane / Barrie

## **12.Networking events**

There was a particular request at the AGM for consideration to be given to running networking events. The recent 'Building Resilience' initiative had highlighted a particular need for members to be able to meet socially to discuss individual issues as well as to potentially do business with one another. Given her experience of networking events elsewhere, Sarah agreed to give some thought to how such events might be structured and report back.

**Action:** Sarah

## **13.Community Waffle House music event**

This potential event has been placed on hold for the time being

## **14.Any other business**

Barrie had received an approach from Marketing West who would like Chamber / Totally Locally Axminster backing for the 2022 Axminster Business Awards . The organiser has outlined a plan to launch the awards at the end of June with a view to a lunchtime awards ceremony in November. Members tended to prefer an evening event and voiced confusion over how nominations were put forward and how the awards themselves were judged. In the circumstances, the committee declined involvement for 2022.

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

Monday 18 July, George Hotel – 6.30pm