

Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Minutes of Management Committee

(Draft until approved at next meeting)

Held at the George Hotel on Monday 25 July 2022

Present: Jane Rockett (Chair), Karen Hussey (Vice Chairman), Jess Brooks (Treasurer), Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Adrian Lausch, Pippa Galvin, Sarah Marsh-Collings, Sandie Draper, Andy Richardson

1: Apologies: Steve Holt, Jan Rowe, Naomi Eden, Jason Marsh-Collings

2: Minutes: The minutes of the Management Committee held on 20 June 2022 were approved as a correct record. (Proposed by: Adrian, seconded by Pippa).

3: Matters arising:

Axminster Business Awards - Barrie had advised the awards organiser of our decision not to participate in the 2022 awards. He had responded to the effect that he did not feel the nomination and judging processes were fully understood. It was additionally pointed out that a lunchtime awards ceremony does not work for many Chamber members.

4: Treasurer's report

Jess reported a balance of approx £2,837 in the Totally Locally account and £1,500 in the main account. The issue of full access to our banking facilities persists. To resolve this Jane will pursue her access as a signatory.

Action: Jane

5: Financial management

The committee discussed how best to achieve day-to-day management of expenditure and agreed that a light touch was the best approach once project budgets had been agreed and responsibility assigned. It was hoped that a debit card would be available once full account access had been achieved.

6: Correspondence

- a. **Axe Valley Community College** - Jane reported on an approach from Cllr Jeremy Walden in his capacity as a governor of AVCC seeking to build a relationship between the college and businesses. She will arrange a meeting with the head in September to discuss.

Action: Jane

- b. **Empty premises** - Jane had noted several people asking on social media about vacant commercial premises in the local area. She is planning to create a list and is in touch with several local landlords to that effect.

Action: Jane

7: Shop local campaign

The committee discussed the prospect of a 'shop local' loyalty event for the coming months. There was no immediate enthusiasm for a 'Fiver Fest' or similar style of campaign. The feeling was that the focus should be towards Christmas and to integrate a campaign with Light Up Axminster's Xmas plans and also incorporating Small Business Saturday ideas. This could take the form of an enhanced Christmas Trail, maybe incorporating a video and strong social media campaign. Jane and Barrie will discuss ahead of the next meeting.

Action: Jane / Barrie

8: Business directory and membership campaign

A detailed brief had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Adrian went through the details and there was enthusiastic support for the proposition as outlined, including a printed version of the directory.

Barrie explained the need to achieve recognition of the directory as a key benefit of Chamber membership and it was agreed that the cost should be integrated into the annual fees. This led to a further discussion on the level of fees that would be chargeable for the financial year starting in February 2023. A flat rate of £50 regardless of business size was agreed. (Proposed by Jane, seconded by Adrian).

It was agreed that work on the directory should get underway without delay.

Action: Adrian / Barrie

9: Networking events

A detailed discussion document prepared by Sarah had been circulated. This envisaged networking events on two potential levels: 1 hosted by larger members and including a tour of their premises followed by short elevator pitches and socialising opportunities; 2 A more relaxed style of event at a hospitality venue with a short round of intros followed by informal networking.

Andy felt that a breakfast event was the most likely to generate participation and to build long term relationships. It was agreed that he would approach suitable venues, assess costs and report back with a plan to the next meeting (in September). Preference was expressed for timings between 7.15 am and 8.30 am and using locations in Axminster if possible.

Action: Andy

10: Totally Locally Axminster projects update

Barrie provided a written brief on Totally Locally Axminster initiatives. Discussion focused in particular on the early success of the banners project. It was agreed that letters should be sent to both the Axminster Community Shed and the George Hotel to thank them for their respective contributions to making the project a success. The committee also agreed to a £200 donation to Community Shed funds to recompense for the costs they had incurred in hosting the banner painters for several months (proposed by Karen, seconded by Jess).

The Banners Group will be asked to set out their thoughts on how the next (2023) phase of the project might be handled, including banner locations and the potential involvement of schools and other groups in the designs.

Action: Barrie

11: Axminster Town Council report

Steve Holt had provided a written which Barrie summarised (and which is attached with these minutes). Members discussed the request for ideas to help in the quest to make Axminster a destination town. It was pointed out that the street banners project was already making an important contribution and would hopefully expand further. Totally Locally Axminster had also been instrumental in guiding the 'Axminster Eats' initiative through its formative phase. Other ideas mentioned included development of some form of festival that could be attached to Axminster (eg a walking event or book festival). These will be passed on to Steve for discussion.

Action: Barrie

12: Any other business

Lloyds Bank closure – there was general concern about the impact on local businesses of the decision announced a few days previously that the local branch of Lloyds would close in November. It was agreed that the Chamber should do all it could to tackle the resulting impacts. Action points were agreed as follows:

- 1 Liaise with Axminster Town Council to assess the scope for challenging the planned closure.
- 2 Write to our MP to ask what he can do to press Axminster's case
- 3 Ask the Post Office to consider what it can do to gear up to cope with the additional resulting demand, and do what we can to promote its services
- 4 Press for a new cash point to be provided in the centre of the town to replace the one to be lost at Lloyds
- 5 Contact NatWest to see if it might consider additionally locating its weekly mobile service somewhere in the town centre.

13: Date of next meeting

Monday 19 September 2022, George Hotel at 6.30pm

Signed as a correct record:

..... (Chair)

Date