

Axminster Chamber of Commerce

Minutes of Management Committee

(Draft until approved at next meeting)

Held at the George Hotel on Monday 26 September 2022

(delayed by one week due to the Queen's state funeral)

Present: Jane Rockett (Chair), Karen Hussey (Vice Chairman), , Barrie Hedges (Secretary), Alison Hayward, Adrian Lausch, Pippa Galvin, Jason Murrell, Elaeonor Goddard, Mark Dowdeswell, Karen Dowdeswell, Colin Hayward (Axminster Community Shed)

1: Apologies

Jess Brooks, Naomi Eden, Jan Rowe, Emma Rowe, Sarah-Marsh Collings, Sandie Draper, Andy Richardson

2: Minutes

The minutes of the Management Committee held on 25 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Karen / Seconded: Pippa

3: Matters arising

- a. **Lloyds bank closure** – Plans have been announced for a shared banking hub in Axminster, though minimal details are as yet available. It would be staffed by the major banks on a rotation basis. Lloyds have not responded to Chamber's approaches, and Nat West have yet to reply to our appeal to consider adding the town centre as an additional location for its weekly van. Chamber has also approached the Link network and provided further information to support a replacement ATM. Chamber is otherwise working with Axminster Town Council.

Action: Jane will contact Axminster Town Council for an update on any further progress

- b. **Business rates** – EDDC's Revenues team has agreed to a meeting (probably in late Oct / Nov) at which concerned businesses can raise issues and understand the regulations the council has to meet. It is also hoped that a representative from the Local Valuation Office can attend.
- c. **Shoppers & Visitors Map** – further advice awaited from Steve Holt (see note below)
- d. **Axe Valley Community College** – planned meeting yet to take place

4: Treasurer's report

To be tabled at the next meeting. Banking difficulties continue - Karen will talk to Jess about how to resolve.

Action: Karen

5. Correspondence

None

6. Axminster Town Council report

See separate attachment.

7. Axminster Renewal Forum

A detailed report will be provided at the next meeting

8. 'Shop local' campaign

Barrie provided an update on the emerging 'Big Deal for Axminster' campaign, with 21 businesses currently signed up. The campaign will be launched in the next few days and will run from 8 October until Christmas with strong social media support from Sarah Marsh-Collings.

Action: Barrie / Sarah

9. Christmas events

Jane summarised the progress she has made in developing a pre-Christmas events campaign that picks up from the switching on of the Christmas lights at the end of November. The aim will be to encourage retailers to remain open into the afternoon on each of the pre-Christmas Saturdays in December and to work with other organisations to provide music and other incentives to shoppers to come into town. We will also run a Christmas Trail. Jane will bring further detailed plans to the next meeting.

Action: Jane

10. Empty properties

In order to address uncertainty over commercial property availability, Jane is approaching landlords with a view to producing an updatable guide to help any business looking for premises in Axminster.

Action: Jane

Barrie has maintained contact with Palmers Brewery over the potential use of the former River Cottage (a) for display purposes and (b) for some form of social or community use. Palmers have confirmed their support for use of the windows but pointed out that there would be business rates and insurance issues to be overcome prior to possible wider use. EDDC has been asked for advice on the rates issue as a precursor.

Action: Barrie

11. Banners

Pippa provided an update on the banners campaign, which it is generally agreed has made a valuable contribution to the town centre through the summer. Fifteen banners have been put on display and two more are in production ready for next year. The volunteer team will now take a break ahead of developing plans to add more banners over a wider area of the town centre next year.

12. Business directory

Adrian provide an update on the newly launched directory www.axminsterbusinessdirectory.co.uk which has already achieved approaching 40 listings in a very short time. With the testing stage

complete, it will now be publicised to the community while also encouraging more businesses to sign up. Adrian and Barrie will look at how best to use the wider promotional opportunities from the site.

Action: Adrian / Barrie

13. Networking events

Andy (away on holiday) is in the process of developing a business breakfasts networking proposition for consideration. Le Pisani has expressed willingness to host and further supporting details will follow.

Action: Andy

14. Any other business

- a. **Eat & Drink Guide** – Jane has circulated some 20 businesses in Axminster’s hospitality sector and is drawing together information on what food and drink is available. This will be made available to the community in an easily accessible format once complete.

Action: Jane

- b. **Axminster Community Shed** – Colin was congratulated on the recent award from East Devon AONB for community input and thanked for the Shed’s invaluable role in supporting our banners project.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at the George Hotel at 6.30pm on Monday 17 October 2022.

Signed as a correct record:

..... (Chair)

Date