

Axminster Chamber of Commerce Management Committee - Monday 17 June 2024 - 6.30pm

at Axminster Tools, Weycroft Avenue, Axminster EX13 5PH

Present: Jane Rockett (Chair), Matt McAuley, Mark Dowdeswell, Sandie Draper, Colin Hayward, Sarah Hunt, Francesca Dowdeswell, Karen Hussey and Kate Ridout

Minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Barrie Hedges and Karen Dowdeswell

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Mark Seconded: Sandie

3. Correspondence

Jane referred to a request from The Waffle House requesting payment for the annual hosting of the What's on Axminster website. Francesca advised that it is now a team of four working on the project, that it was one they were very passionate about and that current workload was manageable. Confirming the cost as £202 per year, Mark suggested that there may be Council funding available through a grants budget and will raise this at their next meeting the following Monday. Although there is anticipated to be a two to four week response. Alternatively, Jane questioned the need for a separate banners website in order to prevent unnecessary duplication of costs.

Action: Mark

Jane referred to correspondence with Calvin regarding a networking opportunity for Axminster, but questioned the need in Axminster. This view was shared by Kate who noted that it would be difficult to do during business hours or otherwise more would join an existing one in the community. She therefore suggested polling local businesses to understand demand. Mark suggested inviting Calvin to join the next meeting via zoom to share his insights.

Action: Jane

4. Finance & membership

(a) Update on finances

With Alison absent the main topic of review was writing off an overspend by the railway project, which was agreed by the room. A deficit in GoFundMe monies was noted, sitting at £1,500 against the required £4,000. Kate confirmed she was yet to count in the collection boxes, however. Noted the GoFundMe would be updated.

Proposed: Jane Seconded: Sandie

(b) Update on memberships

Jane noted that Alison is in the process of chasing both memberships and invoices. She expressed that email responses are low among new prospects, that What's on Axminster does the best job of promotion, that recommendations are key and a desire to attract members that were not solely retail. Kate questioned where the Chamber is advertised, suggesting that the networking is valuable, but other benefits are unclear for the self-employed. Matt advised that the Axminster Tools place is a hub for visitors further afield as well as local clubs and offered to display promotional material on site. Sandie proposed loyalty clubs and Jane "Where to go" leaflets. A lack of branding and promotional material was noted by a few, with Jane agreeing to acquire costs for marquee options.

Action: Jane

5. 'Axminster Gate to Plate' 2024 / Axminster Eats

We received feedback from various businesses both outside the meeting and during the meeting. There was a mixed response with takings but the general consensus was that the majority would prefer it to have been on a Saturday rather than a Bank Holiday (increased costs due to opening on BH plus for Sole traders it is their only time off). Karen noted the volume of the work was left to Jane and that greater support was needed in the future. Jane said that Colin's help in putting up and taking down the gazebo was invaluable.

6. Axminster Scarecrow Trail

Alison has confirmed intentions to run the same next year. Had 55 entries in total and the intention is to bring some to the Axe Vale show the coming weekend. Karen suggested including promotional material so it is clearer that it is a Chamber project.

7. Town map

Jane mentioned that Delphine had quoted for the project but that this was pending a final brief from Paul Hayward, who would then also take it to Council to enquire about sharing the costs. Where it should be displayed

was discussed with Jane suggesting local caravan sites and Kate citing the need for exposure of business offerings and promotions. Matt suggested it could be stapled to receipts/provided in sales packs, of which Jane requested a sample.

8. Training

Jane confirmed all training was complete and that any pdfs and powerpoint from the sessions would be shared with Chamber members. Sandie requested this be via email as the most convenient way for her. Mark confirmed that learnings from the training had been implemented and positive results were already clear. Karen suggested training other than marketing topics would be useful so Jane intends to approach Steve on the matter.

Action: Jane

9. Model railway

Kate provided an update stating they are currently decorating the room and removing damp before moving the model from River Cottage premises. Work is ongoing to create an educational pack to support cross-generational visitors. Intentions are to obtain charitable status but fundraising required. Matt suggested Axminster Tools attracts modelers who may be interested and Jane proposed coffee mornings at the church which are a reliable fundraising source.

Action: Kate

10. Banners

Jane confirmed that design costs have been obtained, that print costs have been requested and that the project is aiming for launch ahead of the summer holidays. Karen proposed not numbering the pages so they could be reused in future years, with Kate agreeing to this method. Colin suggested charging for the sheets with Kate suggesting a prize for a drawing competition in age groups. The group was forthcoming with prize offers from Mark, Jane, Matt and Sandie.

Jane agreed to send around costs for approval on that basis.

11. Plans for Christmas

Jane advised that music in the square was ineffective the previous year with little attendance. A conflict with other organizations was mentioned as a potential issue. It was proposed that the loyalty card be revived but at a smaller £5 value so more shops could participate. With Karen suggesting

advance notice of launch dates would be crucial. Also suggested was a best dressed window competition and a 'find the santa' competition - Jane is going to write to the PCC check that they are not planning a repeat of the window competition.

Action: Jane

12. Council report

Mark updated the committee, stating that the main agenda was local consultation for housing. An annual budget for the church clock had also been agreed at £250. He also noted that the police are requesting volunteers for speed checking operations in the town. Furthermore, the Mayor and Deputy have been reelected, with training in place for Councillors to prepare for the role/s in future. An coach tourism strategy was also noted, which the room wholly supported, with some remaining queries on where best to offload passengers. Market day was suggested as the best day for Axminster to be involved given the choice.

13. Any other business

none

14. Date of next meeting

Monday 15th July - Axminster Tools