

MALMESBURY & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 17 March 2009 at 6 pm
at Malmesbury Garden Centre, Crudwell Road, Malmesbury

Present : Stefan Barbaruk, David Butcher, Julian Butler, Judy Clark, Chris Jager, Jane Nurden, Karen Reynolds, Les Reynolds, Lesley Thomas, Michael Thomas, Alan Woodward (Chair) and Cllr Patrick Goldstone

1. APOLOGIES: Alan Cavill, Mark Jones, Angela Smith.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: The Minutes of the committee meeting held on 17 February 2009, having been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING: None.

4. MAY BUSINESS SHOW: Cllr Goldstone recapped on the arrangements agreed at the AGM and the previous meeting. However, Malmesbury and Villages CAP have now arranged a very similar event for 25 April 2009. The decision had therefore been taken, following consultation with all concerned, to postpone the joint Chamber / Town Council event until early September / October, although the lack of communication had not been from our two organisations. (The date has subsequently been agreed as Saturday 3 October for insertion into 'Wessex in Business'.) Malmesbury Town Council had agreed to underwrite the event to £750 and the hire of the Town Hall would come from Town Promotion & Tourism Committee funding. The same small sub-committee as before would do the planning.

Cllr Goldstone also mentioned that, together with the secondary school, the town council is having bright flags made as part of the school's GCSE coursework. This is an initiative for the council, school and Chamber to work together to enhance the high street, with the intention of using the brackets which hold the Christmas trees, covered by MTC insurance. The council and school will call on businesses in the High Street, which they hope will support the initiative. Next year will be the 1000th anniversary of Elmer and the intention is to follow this up with similar ideas. There was also some discussion regarding the empty high street shops, with the suggestion that the school could do some artwork to enhance those shopfronts. Stefan confirmed that the owners would have to pay rates now, unless buildings are listed, even though it's not a good time for letting. Lesley would approach Mark Jones to contact the landlords to see if permission would be granted for the artwork, with various possibilities – in the early autumn as we are fast approaching the exam season, or before the carnival; as a competition between the schools with the public voting for the best one; and work that could be moved to other shopfronts or the Town Hall as the premises are let.

4a. EASTER BUNNY EVENT: This was an extra item to the agenda, taking place on Easter Saturday, 11 April, organised by Jane, Les and Karen. There will probably be a market that day but Phil Rice would be able to confirm if the market cross is free. There would be a 'spot the egg' competition involving the high street shops. The playgroup would be approached to do face painting, 'Amanda's' to do some food and Simon Killane regarding a Fairtrade presence. Julian would liaise with the ATC to ask them to help on the day and raise some funds for their organisation. It was felt necessary to attract people into the town now that the surgery has gone. David will cost out a board showing what's on, at the top of the town, and a banner to go across the high street with a slot for changing the date annually. Jane would liaise with him regarding posters. David would also ask the newspapers to contact Jane to promote the event. The Farmer's Market is keen to hold joint events so the format could be followed for other school holidays and festive days. Alan confirmed Chamber backing but that there is not much money available.

Karen, Les and Michael left the meeting at this point.

5. ALTERNATIVE BUSINESS SHOW: An email had been received from Ray Sanderson with details of the event on 25 April. The Chamber would not have a stall in its own right as there was no-one available on the day to man it. It seemed that not all businesses had been individually approached, but Lesley would email the details to members.

6. CORRESPONDENCE: An email had been received from Cancer Research UK asking to be a guest speaker at one of our meetings. As most of the small businesses support individual charities anyway it was agreed that Lesley would reply explaining this.

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7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Alan would be attending the North Wilts Economic Consultative meeting in Chippenham on 18 March, to discuss the new way of working under the new Wiltshire authority. Stefan suggested that it would be a good idea to have a speaker to talk to the Chamber to elaborate on this. Under the current authority the 6 North Wilts Chambers met regularly to discuss unified ideas and problems. The new divisions will be North Wilts including Marlborough, West Wilts including Devizes, and South Wilts including Salisbury. Stefan confirmed that there would be 20 new Area Boards, with each of the Chambers having a seat on them. The new economic partnerships would incorporate the Chambers of Commerce, the police, Jobcentre Plus and schools. Ian Storey would probably be the North Wilts representative. It was suggested that it would be helpful if Ian could visit each Chamber regularly, possibly 2-3 times a year, with a forthcoming brainstorming session for Cricklade, Wootton Bassett and Malmesbury to address similar problems. Collette Mallon was being employed by WACC and paid for by the new Wiltshire Council to look at companies wishing to relocate or expand, and addressing planning issues. The new authority recognises that it needs to be challenged on certain issues. John Thomson would be speaking at the forthcoming Presidents and Treasurers meeting, which Chris Jager had volunteered to attend as Malmesbury's representative. David also reported back, from a meeting he had recently attended with Tesco, that they are keen to have a high street face as they are aware that these areas need to be revitalised.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT: Lesley circulated the draft minutes of the recent finance committee meeting. Alan Woodward will speak to Mike Williams to discuss paying £10 per member, rather than £20, to WACC. Julian explained the thinking behind this and that the increase in subs at the end of 2009 should make the finances easier. The Chamber needs to be seen to be particularly active, particularly if a rival business organisation is set up in the town.

9. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN: Following discussion as to whether this position is actually needed, Judy proposed, seconded by Jane, unanimously agreed, that Julian and David would share the role. Alan thanked them for this, as he appreciates the support, particularly for meetings and other committees.

10. CHRISTMAS COMMITTEE: David would chair, with Julian as the vice-chair. Jane and Judy to be members, with Stephanie Kenny and Karen Reynolds to be asked. The committee would communicate by phone and email for the time being. David will speak to the police to request that the whole high street is closed, as with the Petticoat Lane event, and also regarding clearing the street earlier than 4pm. Lesley would contact County Highways for a contact for road closures under the new authority. Lesley would also write to Miss Hoskins at E & S Shops to thank her for the £250 donated towards the snow machine. Jane suggested that small collecting boxes for the snow machine are placed on shop counters all the year round.

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11. FUTURE EVENTS: The following have been arranged:

- (i) At our next meeting, 21 April at 6pm, Sue Wilkin, Trading Standards, will give a general overview and open it up to questions, from the seller's point of view and cancellation of contracts within a buyer's home. Any Chamber business would be discussed after her talk. Tea and coffee would be provided, to be paid for on the night.
- (ii) Wednesday 6 May at 7.30pm at the Red Bull, skittles event with Wootton Bassett and Cricklade. The cost is £2.50 a head for sandwiches, chips and nibbles, with £1 a head for help with setting up the skittles. We will charge £4.50 per head.
- (iii) Mel Maslin is investigating getting the Chamber onto the long waiting list for Highgrove.
- (iv) Lesley will speak to Stephanie Kenny regarding WCCR doing a presentation in June.
- (v) It was suggested that we may try to arrange a 'meet the bank manager' talk later in the year.

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Jane left the meeting at this point.

12. NEWSLETTER: Various ideas for inclusion were discussed, including David's idea of a loyalty card for the town. This would work in a similar way to the old 'Green Shield Stamps' scheme. It was agreed that the newsletter would be a two-sided A4 sheet this time, to keep costs down.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- (i) Stefan confirmed that the New Business Competition would be launched on Thursday 14 May at Castle Combe circuit once again, as an afternoon event with the possibility of going round the track. The final is at Bowood on 20 November, and the local prizegiving on Thursday 29 October, here in Malmesbury. Stefan was still seeking sponsors for £250-£300.

The next meeting will be the open meeting with Trading Standards on Tuesday 21 April at 6pm at the Garden Centre. The meeting closed at 8.05pm.