

MALMESBURY & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 18 November 2008 at 6 pm
at Malmesbury Garden Centre, Crudwell Road, Malmesbury

Present : Stefan Barbaruk, David Butcher (Malmesbury Garden Centre), David Butcher (Abbey Printing), Julian Butler, Alan Cavill, Judy Clark, Chris Jager, Mark Jones, David Scull, Lesley Thomas, Michael Thomas and Alan Woodward (Chair)

1. APOLOGIES: Keith Holdsworth, Jane Nurden, Angela Smith.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: The Minutes of the committee meeting held on 21 October 2008, having been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING: There were none.

4. CORRESPONDENCE:

· Email from Chris Major, Parking Project Manager, WCC, regarding Cross Hayes car park. This had been previously circulated to the committee.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Alan confirmed that the final judging of the New Business competition had now been done. Both Alan C. and Keith had been involved in the initial judging, with Alan W. standing in for Keith at the final, when there would have been a conflict of interests regarding one of the finalists. Both Stefan and Alan W. confirmed that standards had been extremely high. The final presentation would be this forthcoming Friday, when 100 people would be attending an event at Bowood.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT: Alan C. reported balances: current account £33.75 and deposit account £3,010.60. There would be a cheque going out to pay for the snow machine, which would temporarily reduce the balance, but would be reimbursed by NWDC and sponsorship. The minutes of the recent Finance committee meeting had been circulated, at which meeting the proposal for an increase to the subscriptions, to be recommended to members at the AGM, was reiterated. Reminders would shortly be going out regarding membership subscriptions – based on last year's membership there should be 78 to pay up. From experience based on other Chambers Stefan predicted that we should see approximately 80% renewing their membership. David B. (Abbey Printing) questioned what the break-even point is, at which the Chamber is solvent, as he had done some calculations and deduced that the Chamber had no money. Alan C. was unable to comment when placed on the spot in this way and would report back. David questioned how we planned to go forward, and felt generally concerned about what we were proposing to do for members for their money over the next 12 months and asked to see a copy of the constitution. Lesley agreed to look for the most recent and provide this to him.

David realises that the Chamber is part of WACC, although he disagrees with our membership of the association at the current time. However, he seemed to be under the impression that 60% of our membership subscriptions do, or would, go to WACC at some point. Stefan confirmed Malmesbury's arrangement. Even if the proposed increase in subscriptions for 2009-10 is passed at the AGM, any change in our payments to WACC would need to be discussed by both WACC and the Malmesbury committee. Stefan pointed out that 60% of the Chambers would be insolvent on the basis of their accounts and that Malmesbury's account balances are healthier than most. David B. (Garden Centre) suggested that, if members want the Chamber to exist, they need to be encouraged to turn up for the AGM to agree to the proposed increase, and that most of our correspondence is done by work email which costs nothing, and while we continue to meet at the Garden Centre this costs nothing. Alan W. confirmed that the actual expenses consist of paying the secretary's salary, the insurance cost to Wessex and other administrative costs and that we are aware that we need to be prudent. The end of the next financial year, i.e. October 2009, would be the responsibility of the new post-AGM committee.

7. REVIEW OF TOWN PROMOTION MEETING: Alan W. questioned if we want to meet again with external bodies to follow up on this. Ross Mackie, who is Chairman of the Residents' Association, and Cllr Patrick Goldstone were both keen to do so, and it was agreed that they would be invited to the December committee meeting. David B. (Abbey Printing) reported that Cirencester Chamber and Council were starting a series of workshop sessions the day after this meeting, backed by Gloucester County Council, to promote Cirencester aggressively next year and that there would therefore be competition.

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Stefan pointed out that WCC can do nothing in this vein at the moment with the approach of the new unitary authority and the subsequent massive reorganisation, but David B. (Garden Centre) suggested we all need to do this for our own interests. David B. (Abbey Printing) gave details of his 'Looking in Malmesbury First' project, which is being backed by some of the local chainstores. This is not a commercial undertaking but is on behalf of businesses in general, and leaflets and cards are free. We all agreed that anything to encourage local business and reduce carbon footprint is a good idea, taking some cards to pass out in our local areas and businesses, and agreed that David could promote the campaign with the endorsement of the Chamber. David also confirmed that he wishes to create a website with a full list of all businesses, and is looking at having something delivered by the Post Office to every household in the area, in a similar vein to 'Malmesbury Connections', the new Sherston-orientated magazine.

8. LATE NIGHT CHRISTMAS SHOPPING UPDATE:

- (i) The funfair is happy to arrive to set up at 3pm on the day and Lesley had confirmed to him that parked vehicles would be gone from the area by then.
- (ii) Lesley confirmed, in Keith's absence, that he is happy to do traffic duty. Mark Jones is co-ordinating this and volunteers should meet at the Post Office, as before, from 5.30pm onwards.
- (iii) David B. (Garden Centre) requested help to dismantle Father Christmas's shed at 9pm.
- (iv) Lesley will write to Athelstan House to thank them for their work in wrapping the presents.

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9. **NEW BUSINESS COMPETITION:** This had been covered in the Chairman's Report above.

10. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR AGM, WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2009:** Speakers were discussed. David B. (Abbey Printing) suggested someone from PR or marketing in these difficult times. Judy suggested inviting the PCT at Burton Hill to explain what goes on in their new facilities. Lesley would pursue both these ideas with a view to having a speaker for the AGM and the March open meeting.

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11. **PROPOSED TECHNOLOGY / BUSINESS EVENT IN 2009:** An outdoor or Town Hall event was discussed, and also the possibility of joining in with the annual fun day held locally. David B. (Garden Centre) would find out if the Town Council was prepared to host an event in the Town Hall on a Saturday in June, also asking them to sponsor this as it would benefit all Malmesbury businesses, with the Chamber charging a nominal fee. Businesses could have an unmanned or manned table, as they wish, the format being a combined technology and business event. Stefan confirmed that Business Link is currently trying to promote innovation events, and we all agreed that these difficult economic times are when businesses need to stand up.

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12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- (i) David B. (Garden Centre) raised a concern with local villages transport. There was now a minibus in Rodbourne, Startley and Seagry, going to Chippenham, to replace the bus. Great Somerford Parish Council wished to request its route be changed to bring the passengers into Malmesbury. Lesley would write a letter to email to David for his signature, to back this proposal.
- (ii) Judy reported a spate of vandalism regarding hanging baskets and tubs on Sunday night. She had reported this to the police. It was suggested that she should report this to Mike Tripp (Neighbourhood Police Team Manager).
- (iii) David B. (Garden Centre) is resigning from the Town Council's Car Parking sub committee. He will, however, write to the Chairman of the committee to explain the Chamber of Commerce's stance on parking. Stefan confirmed that WCC has put car parking issues on hold.
- (iv) Lesley is in the throes of conducting a waste management survey for WACC, and Stefan explained the background. The aim is to get a cross section across the county. The survey was circulated to everyone at the meeting, with a request to return this to Lesley directly or to WACC. Michael Thomas would circulate some copies to other businesses.
- (v) There was some discussion of missing road signs and the fact that Malmesbury Business Park has no sign at all.
- (vi) Chris Jager confirmed he is planning to retire from business next year. He will be happy to continue to update the Chamber's website on a non-commercial basis. David B. (Abbey Printing) asked to discuss any business Chris has to hand over or sell, as he would like to build on what Chris has done and is keen, as mentioned above, to have every business in Malmesbury listed on a website.

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The next meeting is on Tuesday 16 December at 6pm at the Garden Centre.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.