

MALMESBURY & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 19 August 2008 at 6 pm
at Malmesbury Garden Centre, Crudwell Road, Malmesbury

Present : Stefan Barbaruk, David Butcher, Julian Butler, Chris Jager, Mark Jones, David Scull, Lesley Thomas, Michael Thomas and Alan Woodward (Chair)

1. APOLOGIES: Alan Cavill, Judy Clark, Jane Nurden, Angela Smith.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: The Minutes of the committee meeting held on 22 July 2008, having been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING: There were none.

4. CORRESPONDENCE:

- New member form and subscription from Grosvenor House Accountants in Tetbury.
- Letter from Ray Sanderson, as Portfolio Holder Car Parking with NWDC, which had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting. Ray had confirmed to Alan that day that there would be a joint meeting with representatives of the Town Council on Tuesday 26 August at 5.30pm in the Town Hall to discuss car parking concessions as detailed in the letter. It was agreed that Alan and Michael would attend – David B. would not be attending as this is separate from the Malmesbury Town Council car parking committee on which he sits. The Chamber wished to propose that the first hour be at 30p (i.e. 20p off) as this would be better for those people who ‘pop and shop’, whereas if they want to stay longer they would happily pay the extra, although with this concession the second hour would be reduced to 80p. Stefan confirmed that under the new unitary authority the local community boards should have a Chamber member on them to give views on issues such as this.

5. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT: Alan referred the committee to the Town Council newsletter which had been distributed to all residents that day. A meeting in July was referred to under ‘Parking Issues’, which had obviously already taken place. This had been the fact-finding mission on 16 July at the Town Hall with Cllr Christine Reid of WCC, rather than a meeting. There was discussion on the potential residents’ parking scheme as discussed by the Town Council committee and the seemingly dangerous traffic calming on Tetbury Hill. Stefan urged us to remember that many of the people who come up with these ideas do not run businesses and our members need to have constructive ideas. Mark pointed out that residents and shopkeepers have totally different agendas. David B. reiterated his belief that a ‘park and ride’ scheme would be the solution, provoking more discussion on this.

6. TREASURER’S REPORT: There was no report as Alan is away.

7. WOMAD FEEDBACK: This was good – Somerfield and the High Street benefitted. The bus route needs to be changed to take in The Triangle: this will only happen if WOMAD use a different bus company. David B. reported that the Garden Centre had learnt some lessons about where to position things, but trade was 21% down on last year because the weather was better. Traffic flow was generally good. The festival needs to be encouraged as it is good for the town and the community. Lesley will obtain the contact information from David B. to write to WOMAD regarding the bus route, asking for it to be expanded to include The Triangle and Burton Hill Caravan Park.

8. LATE NIGHT CHRISTMAS SHOPPING UPDATE: The Christmas committee would meet on Tuesday 26 August. Lesley will confirm with Phil Rice, Deputy Town Clerk, that we wish to close the Market Cross at 3pm, through to 9pm, to enable the funfair to set up. She will then arrange the closure with NWDC, with the Upper High Street to be closed from 5 - 9pm. The actual event will run from 6 – 9pm. Cllr Goldstone, who is concerned that the town is losing momentum in the retail sector, has suggested that Father Christmas could go in the new Tourist Information Centre and, although this would save work on setting up, attention would be detracted from the High Street, especially if it’s a damp night as people will not wander so much. David B. would recommend to the Christmas committee that Father Christmas should stay in the High Street as before as this has always been successful. Lesley is waiting to hear from Malmesbury Concert Band if they are willing to play. Julian will contact the juggler.

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9. SPOT THE MISTAKE UPDATE: The competition is running at the moment, through to 30 August. There was discussion once again regarding the Chamber underselling itself and being realistic, as the Scarecrow Trail, also running at the moment, is charging each entrant £2. Next time we run our competition it was agreed to charge entrants, not just non-member businesses, to participate.

10. NEW BUSINESS COMPETITION: Lesley has sent out four forms – they will all need to come back if we are to have our own competition in Malmesbury. The venue for the judging on 23 October will be the Red Bull once again. Stefan confirmed that he has booked Bowood for the final presentation on Friday 21 November. Lesley will ask the Wilts and Glos Standard to feature the competition again before the closing date on 26 September, and we all need to promote the competition as much as possible.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- (i) The next Open Meeting will be 16 September when Steve Kenny from West Country Cash Registers will be the speaker. If there is any urgent business to conduct, the committee will stay on at the end of the meeting for this. It was agreed that David B. would arrange a finger buffet (Michael agreed to supply wine), charging members £5. Lesley would arrange a flyer for this to go out with the mailshot from Trowbridge on 26 August and would ask the press to promote the meeting.
- (ii) Stefan reminded everyone that the majority of companies are eligible to participate in the free training available and urged them to take advantage: 1,000 people are needed to participate. ‘Train to Gain’ had been running this scheme but Wilts County Council had accepted a bid for WACC to run it as they are closer to businesses. Migrant workers can also learn English as a foreign language under the scheme.
- (iii) Stefan reminded us of the intention to conduct a Waste Management survey with businesses, as a result of problems being experienced in Wootton Bassett. All 16 towns will be looking for replies from 30 businesses, via the secretaries, for one to one feedback. It may then be possible to find one county-wide provider. Michael would give David B. contact details from the meeting he had attended with Hills on Business Waste at County Hall on 3 June.
- (iv) Stefan has some well-priced upcoming courses arranged with Switch Training in Crudwell, to avoid members travelling to Trowbridge.
- (v) Lesley had delivered letters and membership forms regarding Late Night Christmas Shopping to all the non-member retailers, chain stores and banks benefitting from the event, asking for donations if they do not wish to join.
- (vi) Julian reported that the Finance committee had decided to recommend to the AGM that subscriptions be raised to £70.50, inclusive of VAT, for the year 2009/10. This works out to a membership cost of £1.35 per week. It was thought that 99% of Chamber members are VAT registered. One more member of the Finance committee is needed and Michael agreed to join. We would therefore hold these meetings at Michael’s shop in the future.
- (vii) Julian reported recent negative comments regarding Malmesbury, in favour of Tetbury, and raised the question of whether this is their Chamber or the Chamber and Town Council working together. It was agreed that Malmesbury’s historical interest needs promoting; Tetbury has Highgrove which pulls in tourists, along with cafés and food shops. The Doctors’ Surgery moving out of the High Street has caused concern and affected footfall in the town and without the Co-Op remaining there the High Street would be dead. Michael reiterated his point from the last meeting that we need to be positive – car parking spaces have now been freed up and our long stay car park is cheaper than elsewhere. Stefan confirmed that WACC employs people to promote sectors of Wiltshire. Unfortunately they do not cover Malmesbury at the moment although the situation should change. People wish to live and work in North Wilts, but NWDC has restricted its plans to certain areas, to the detriment of businesses who have unfortunately been encouraged to go elsewhere. Cllr Goldstone had already requested a meeting with the Chamber, although he is away at present. However, it was felt that discussion needs to be broader, and Lesley would contact Phil Rice to arrange a joint meeting with Cllr Goldstone and the Tourism committee of MTC.

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**The next open meeting is on Tuesday 16 September at 6 pm at the Garden Centre.
The next business meeting is on Tuesday 21 October at 6pm at the Garden Centre.**

Meeting closed at 7.45pm.