

MALMESBURY & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 22 July 2008 at 6 pm at Malmesbury Garden Centre, Crudwell Road, Malmesbury

Present : Stefan Barbaruk, David Butcher, Alan Cavill, Judy Clark, Keith Holdsworth, Chris Jager, David Scull, Lesley Thomas, Jane Nurden, Michael Thomas and Alan Woodward (Chair)

1. APOLOGIES: Julian Butler, Mark Jones, Angela Smith.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: The Minutes of the committee meeting held on 24 June 2008, having been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING: There were none.

4. CORRESPONDENCE:

- An email from Worcester Male Voice Choir promoting their concert on 18 July 2009 in aid of Cancer Research UK, asking if the Chamber could involve themselves in some way and requesting a copy of our membership list. In view of the data protection implications concerning distribution of addresses, Stefan suggested that Lesley refers them to the WACC website, where they can also view the details for companies in other local Chambers as well as Malmesbury. If they also send a 100 word piece this could be inserted in the local press for them. There was some discussion as to the requirement for the Chamber to register for data protection but under Alan C's guidance this was deferred.
- Letter from Geoff Harding at the Bank of England asking for a change of date for his meeting with Malmesbury businesses, due to a clash with a trip to the Bank in London on 14 October. Lesley will rearrange another date as near to this as possible and confirm to Stefan.
- Stefan gave a summary of a Business Survey which had been conducted by WACC for the 1st and 2nd quarters 2008. Different types of business in Trowbridge had been surveyed, not just the retail sector.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Along with David B and Lesley, Alan W had been invited to a meeting on 16 July at the Town Hall with Cllr Christine Reid of WCC, as one of the five towns in North Wiltshire with whom Cllr Reid had requested a scrutiny meeting on car parking. This meeting will effectively provide the new unitary authority with parking and related issues data. Although we were able to put the Chamber's point of view, Alan felt the meeting was a waste of time, with Town Council members coming and going throughout the meeting and both Town and County Councils had seemed unprepared for the meeting.

Stefan reported that Ian Storey had spoken at the recent WACC board meeting on the future parking propositions being put forward by those Councillors who will be in charge when the unitary authority comes into effect. When Area Boards are set up decisions will be made locally, and these Boards will include a Chamber representative. Local people know their local area but the Board's remit will probably not include free parking. Cllr Fleur de rhe Philippe, attending this meeting, showed concern for low paid workers who cannot afford the parking charges, as indicated in the Corsham survey. The survey showed real evidence, not speculation, and therefore there can be no argument about it.

Michael suggested that the £1 a day long stay car parking should be advertised more. Following discussion it was felt that we should be more positive about this and the free parking available in Malmesbury. Alan W suggested that all the free parking available in the town should be for one hour uniformly, rather than for different times in different places, which can be confusing.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT: Alan C reported balances: £57.59 current account; £1,309.51 deposit account. There is a meeting of the Finance Committee on Monday 28 July. As it has been 10 weeks since Alan first submitted the application for VAT registration, with little progress being made, authority to lodge a complaint with HMRC was unanimously agreed. Alan will request the registration be backdated until mid May. Once past the registration stage Alan will arrange the move onto the Flat Rate Scheme.

7. PROPOSED INCREASE OF SUBSCRIPTIONS: This will need to be agreed at the AGM in January. Alan C is expecting the VAT registration will produce a net cash flow of £200-£300 or more for the year. David B suggested an increase in line with inflation each year or the jump is too great. Stefan confirmed that the WACC subscriptions were not increasing. Discussion indicated that we need to be cautious as some small businesses may not be VAT registered. They would therefore be unable to claim

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this back, which would mean their subscription would be £52 this year. Alan W stated that there is no alternative if a secretary is to be employed. The move to increase subscriptions by £5 for the year 2009-10 would be discussed by the Finance committee, with a recommendation to be brought to the executive committee in August

8. LATE NIGHT CHRISTMAS SHOPPING UPDATE: David B confirmed that a meeting of the Christmas committee would be held in August. The snow machine will be £410 + VAT plus £34 for the fluid. David has arranged a little sponsorship for this. Lesley will get the letters out now to the non-member retailers, chain stores and banks who benefit from the event, asking for donations. Stefan has a contact for HSBC for Lesley, suggesting she ask for £500. Lesley would confirm to David B the amount of Forum money confirmed by Caroline Lightfoot at NWDC, for which receipts will need to be shown. (Lesley confirmed after the meeting that this will be £996.) Judy suggested we all contact the people we know in the town who would be able to offer some financial support. David B confirmed that we will need two road closure signs – Jane will ask Ian Nurden about this and Lesley will also mention this as another requirement in the letter to be circulated to the retailers. David B will follow up where the lights are going and Judy will obtain permission for the Christmas trees to be lit. Lesley confirmed that the road closures are in hand and that she will also write to Phil Rice to mention that it would be good to have the lights switched on for 1 December, as ideally they need to be on for the whole of December for the Christmas shoppers and late night shopping. Christine Hamilton was suggested as a local celebrity to do the Christmas window judging – to be discussed by the Christmas committee.

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9. SPOT THE MISTAKE UPDATE: Lesley will be putting everything in place early in the next week. The schools have been informed and have mentioned the competition in their newsletters where applicable. £18 had been received from the six non-members taking part. Lesley had decided to print 500 entry forms rather than use Abbey Printing, as she wished to put some colour onto the forms and the cost would be £20+ with them. The Chamber's printer should be able to cope, no coloured ink had been used since the printer had been purchased, paper was relatively cheap, and the over all cost should therefore be minimal.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- (i) The next Open Meeting will be 16 September when Steve Kenny from West Country Cash Registers will be the speaker. The last open meeting had been very successful, but it was decided not to have a business meeting at the September meeting, or discuss business at the end. Lesley would contact Sue Wilkin to speak to the Chamber again next year, this time to concentrate on Trading Standards from a seller's point of view.
- (ii) David B suggested conducting an anonymous poll of the High Street traders regarding their businesses with a view to seeing what help is needed. However, following discussion, it was uncertain as to the purpose of this and what could be done. The current economic climate works both ways – people are neither spending a lot of money nor travelling far to do so but it is a wider opportunity to promote the local town businesses. Michael confirmed that he and Cllr Simon Killane are involved with the "Transition Town Project", as operates in Stroud, which encompasses local tourist attractions, and emphasised the importance of the Town Council and the Chamber working together. Michael informed us of a sub committee for this being held on 26 August in St Mary's Hall, which will be an open meeting. Alan W commended NWDC on the recent "Made in the Malmesbury Area" directory, another positive move.
- (iii) Stefan confirmed that Salisbury Chamber has now joined WACC.
- (iv) Stefan confirmed that the speaker at the Presidents and Treasurers' meeting on Saturday 27 September will be Keith Robinson, Chief Executive of Wilts County Council. He suggested asking him along as a possible speaker for the Chamber.
- (v) Stefan has secured a bid to conduct a Waste Management survey before March, as a result of problems being experienced in Wootton Bassett. He asked that all committee members take part – he will be looking for replies from 30 businesses in each town so that County will then have 450 questionnaires. This is not just about problems but the ways in which businesses manage their waste. Michael had attended a meeting with Hills on Business Waste at County Hall on 3 June and there is to be a follow-up meeting to this. Michael confirmed that Richard Wiltshire at Sweetnam and Bradley is happy to take any cardboard boxes.
- (vi) Stefan reminded us to take up the free training opportunities currently available.
- (vii) Lesley confirmed that she had sent out three entry forms for the New Business competition. Four were needed for our own competition. Stefan had been in discussion with Wilts County Council and hoped that the competition will be county wide next year. For this reason it would be good if it were well supported this year.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 19 August at 6 pm at the Garden Centre.