

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 21st July 2021 at the Stratton House Hotel

Present:

Committee

Annemarie Thurgood (President), David Fowles (Vice President), Adam Vines (Vice President), Jan Sparrow, Aidan Stevens, Hilary Norris-Evans, Fran Coulter, Hannah Hockley and Sarah Somers (Secretary)

Members

Virginia Stourton, Ian McIntyre, Kay Ransom, Richard Jeffcock

Guests

Des Coates, Ruth Wailes, Ellen and Joseph Olutunmogun, Tony Golby, Carlo Vuelo

1. Apologies for Absence

Howard Smith (Treasurer), Howard Burr

2. Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were approved by a show of hands

Proposer: David Fowles Seconded by: Fran Coulter

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. President's Report (Annemarie Thurgood)

Annemarie thanked everybody for joining us for our AGM and our first meeting in person in 16 months.

She reported that this past year had been challenging for both the Chamber and its members. The Chamber had tried where possible to offer support to its members by holding events via Zoom and sending out

regular newsletters with updates and information of support available during the pandemic.

We also reorganised the Business Awards and went ahead with them virtually which gave businesses exposure and something to celebrate during a tough time as the event had over 2,700 views.

Our working relationship with the Town and District Council has become stronger during this past year and we are now holding monthly meetings with them which enables us to pool resources on important issues.

They have also offered financial support to launch the My Cirencester card project which has provided the Cirencester residents with a discount card that they can use in participating shops.

Annemarie ended her report by confirming that she would be stepping down this year. Although it had been a challenging time, it had also been a great opportunity and she had enjoyed it. She thanked both the members and Sarah, the Chamber Secretary, who had started the job just a month before the pandemic hit, so for whom it had been a particularly steep learning curve and whose hard work had been appreciated.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

Aidan Stevens presented the financial statements in draft status for the financial period 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021 on behalf of the Treasurer who was unable to attend. These accounts will be independently reviewed later in the year by Millers Accountants and a copy can be requested by any member.

During the period in question the Chamber has had 3 income streams - memberships, Business Awards income and My Cirencester.

- Memberships – there has been a decline in memberships from £6,971 in prior year to £5,225, the decrease due to Covid and non-renewals. Many members have indicated they will rejoin when we get back to normal
- Business Awards – the awards took place in November 2020 as a virtual event. We would like to thank our sponsors who stuck with us during this time even when our plans had to change from the usual presentation night to a virtual one. Sponsorship income amounted to £6,400 and realised a surplus, after direct costs, of £3,693 which will be carried forward to the next event.
- My Cirencester - the scheme was still in the early stages at the period end having been launched for less than a month. A small deficit (£611) is shown due to the upfront nature of setup and design costs combined with the fact that most of the income generated will be recognised in the next financial period. It is expected overall to show a small surplus after sales and administration costs next year and going forward.

- Running Costs – operational expenses were kept to a minimum in the period and were in line with our planned expectation. There was an extraordinary expenditure of £540 towards the new website as part of our new Chamber offering to be launched shortly.

The combined net income less direct expenses from our activities amounted to £8,732 and after deducting running costs and exceptional web expenses there is a surplus of £2,042 (£1,241 deficit prior year).

The financial statements were put forward for approval.

Proposer: Adam Vines Seconded by: David Fowles

There were no questions and the Chamber's accounts were approved by a unanimous show of hands.

6. Election of President and Officers

David Fowles (Vice-President) took over at this point whilst the post of President was voted for. Annemarie wished to stand down and Adam Vines, former Vice-President, was being put forward to take over.

Nominated as **President: Adam Vines**

Proposer: Jan Sparrow Seconded by: Hilary Norris-Evans

Adam was duly elected by a unanimous show of hands (and applause) and immediately took on the role of meeting host.

Firstly he introduced himself as owner of Lounge Design, a creative marketing business he owns and runs in Cirencester. He has been on the Chamber committee for 3 years and a Trustee of Age UK Gloucestershire for 8 years.

He confirmed it had been a challenging past 18 months and that we'd all had to be flexible and manage ongoing issues, not just in our own businesses but for the Chamber as well.

He reported that a lot of the burden had fallen on the past President's shoulders and was sure that the assembled company would agree that Annemarie had been amazing during her time as President, from being dropped in the deep end to ending her term in difficult circumstances.

Looking to the future, he said that whilst it's hard to plan in uncertain times the Chamber plans on working more closely with town stakeholders like the Town and District Councils and being YOUR voice in the business community, whilst engaging more with the area's larger employers. And finally he confirmed that there would be a Business Awards ceremony next year!

Adam thanked those present, not just for turning up for the AGM but also for continuing to support the Chamber over the last 18 months whilst we were unable to do face-to-face networking.

He continued, although the Chamber is run by the committee on a voluntary basis, it still needs to be run like a business. And like any business that means we need to address our income from time to time in order to survive.

Having looked at other chambers, business clubs and networking groups in the area it had been found that we were significantly cheaper and therefore we have decided to simplify our fee structure and bring it in line with other chambers.

So from August 2021 there will be 3 categories of membership:

- Micro business (1-3 employees) at £75 per year
- Medium business (4-19) at £100 per year
- Enterprise (20+ employees) at £150 per year

Charities are not affected and remain £40 per year.

However, we didn't just want to increase the fees without offering more to our members. So, we have added a few more benefits....

- Option to pay by direct debit to help you spread the cost of membership
- A new Facebook group where members can list their services, pose questions and interact etc.
- One free advertisement in the Chamber newsletter which regularly goes out to nearly 900 business people.
- Social media promotion for your business with a specially designed post on LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Discounted FSB membership saving you £30.00 on your first year's subscription.
- Inclusion in our lobbying with the Town and District Councils.
- Opportunity to be chosen as 'Member of the Month' and featured on Facebook, in the newsletter and Ciren Scene.
- Attendance at regular Zoom surgeries on a variety of themes including finance, marketing, legal etc.
- Member-to-member special offers to encourage collaboration
- Members 'Welcome Pack'
- A referral scheme offering a reduction on your own membership fee.
- A new 'buddy system' to support new members

Hannah Hockley and Fran Coulter had agreed to stand as Joint Vice-Presidents to replace Adam Vines and David Fowles who had served their respective terms and were duly thanked for their efforts.

Nominated as **Joint Vice-Presidents: Fran Coulter and Hannah Hockley**

Proposer: Jan Sparrow Seconded by: Aidan Stevens

Fran and Hannah were duly elected by a unanimous show of hands.

Howard Smith was happy to continue as Treasurer of the Committee.

Nominated as **Treasurer: Howard Smith**

Proposer: Aidan Stevens Seconded by: Vicky Henderson

Howard was duly elected by a unanimous show of hands.

7. Election of Committee

The remaining Committee Members had agreed to stand again:

Howard Burr, David Fowles, Hilary Norris-Evans, Jan Sparrow, Aidan Stevens and Annemarie Thurgood

Proposer: Vicky Henderson Seconded by: Fran Coulter

This group of individuals were duly elected by a unanimous show of hands.

A new committee member had put himself forward for election to the Committee

Nominated: **Ian McIntyre**

Proposer: David Fowles Seconded by: Fran Coulter

8. Any Other Business

There being no other business the formal part of the evening ended and we moved outside for networking and refreshments.