

**MINUTES OF THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE
MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 14TH JUNE 2011**

Present: Suzanne Hall-Gibbins (Gloucestershire), Jon Leamon (Cheltenham), Mark Boyce (Gloucester), Jonathan Davies (Cirencester), Carole Garfield (Stroud) and David Bloxham (Tewkesbury)

Apologies received from: Peter Hodgson (Tetbury)

1. **Welcome & Introduction**

Suzanne welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief introduction as to relationships between GWE Business West and Gloucestershire Chamber, advising that there is a lot of confusion around the Chamber movement in the business community hence arranging this round the table discussion with some of the local Chambers. There was a degree of confusion round the table regarding the existence of the County Chamber (CC) and the local Chambers and as to how it all worked. Suzanne advised that she saw the local Chambers looking after all local issues with the County Chamber looking at things with a bigger impact but with everyone feeding into each other. If the local Chambers can feed into the County Chamber, and vice versa, we can become a louder, more powerful voice.

2. **Update on what local Chambers were doing**

Jon advised that Cheltenham Chamber had a history with the County Chamber however they were starting to work more closely with the County in running joint events. Jon saw these joint events as great opportunities to not only work with the County Chamber but also to increase their membership. Jon also advised that Cheltenham are considering offering honorary membership to Cheltenham based companies for 6 months before then asking them to pay their membership.

Suzanne advised that she would like to see, in an ideal world, that companies would join Business West, then automatically become part of the County Chamber and then also be a part of the local chambers, depending on where they operate. An inspiration but need to be more joined up to start with.

Jonathan advised that Cirencester had been members of Gloucestershire chamber for many years before deciding to resign their membership as they didn't see the point in continuing this. Jonathan advised that there was a huge gap in information and that there was a void between county and local chambers. Suzanne commented that they both need each other to understand things and to create a greater and louder voice.

Mark saw there as being strong links between the local and county chamber. His view was the companies should be a member of the county chamber and have an associate membership with the relevant local chamber. Mark also advised that he had put on an event and invited all other Chambers yet no-one, other than Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, responded.

Carole saw the benefit of a collaboration but doesn't feel that Gloucestershire Chamber is independent due to its ties with Business West. Suzanne explained that this provides additional resources for chamber members and that if you looked at other bigger chambers they would see that they too have additional contracts and cover quite wide areas. Business West has held the Business Link & UKTI contract for years. The County Chamber has full time staff with a good support network behind the scenes operating out of Bristol and are here to help grow businesses – anyone can access the Business Link services regardless of whether they are a member or not but through the Chamber we can package support for a company. Our aim is to provide a critical

mass, stability and to reinvest money in the county and for this to be effective partnerships are essential.

Jonathan enquired about the difference between GFirst and Gloucestershire Chamber. Suzanne advised that she saw GFirst as providing the bigger context with the CC supporting and feeding into it, especially when it came down to the Gloucestershire LEP. British Chambers of Commerce have a scrutiny committee for LEPs to ensure that the views of business support companies are integrated into the LEP.

Mark encouraged the other chambers present to develop stronger links with the County Chamber as this could help all to influence at County and Government levels.

Jonathan felt that there was a huge deficit between the chambers and asked if he could be put on the list to receive information from CC (Kirsty to action). The perception for Jonathan was that the county chamber was for bigger companies rather than the micro business – Kirsty advised that the county chamber does have a number of smaller business from 1 man bands upwards. It was agreed that we would share newsletters with each other so that any information/news that is thought to be relevant to members can be forwarded on (Kirsty to add those present to contact lists and to obtain contacts from other local chambers.)

David advised that Tewkesbury was slightly different as they were smaller but they are members of the county chamber and that he sat on our Executive team. He views the local chambers as micro with the county chamber as macro. He felt that there could be better communication with more information being fed between all chambers to encourage an exchange of ideas.

Jonathan agreed that there should be more co-operation and communication between the chambers but advised that things are taken slowly to start with. Open up the communication lines first as all chambers want to help businesses in the county. Jon advised that Cheltenham chamber have good links with their local councillors but not quite such good links with the county councillors, this is something that the county chamber should be concentrating on. Suzanne advised that we are opening up opportunities to engage with our Meet the MP meetings.

3. **Chamber charges & number of members**

Cheltenham Chamber – have a membership of approximately 120 with a sliding scale of between £80.00 and £120.00.

Cirencester Chamber – 120 members paying between £35.00 to £50.00

Stroud Chamber – currently free membership but are going to be introducing a flat rate of £60.00 shortly. Most of their members are micro businesses.

Gloucestershire Chamber – 280 members paying a flat rate of £300.00. Target is 500 members by September 2011.

Gloucester Chamber – sliding scale

Tewkesbury Chamber – sliding scale of between £30.00 and £60.00

Together we represent over 700 businesses.

4. **Brief outline of other chambers**

Tewkesbury – they hold monthly committee meetings and several networking events throughout the year. They are in charge of the Christmas lights amongst other things in the town. They have also developed strong links with the local council and now get advised when there will be

disruptions to the road network in the town. They are currently trying to close the gap between the town businesses and those on the industrial estates by Junction 9.

Stroud – they are quite unique and see themselves as campaigners. They too have close ties with their local council and receive regular bulletins regarding the road network.

Cirencester – they offer monthly networking with a themed speaker and recently introduced the Cirencester Business Awards, which was incredibly successful. They are keen to promote Cirencester and are looking to have a local yellow pages on their local councils' website to encourage people to shop local.

Gloucester – they are close to the city council and engage well with them. They run a few events throughout the year that are not very well attended; however their annual banquet is always over-subscribed.

Cheltenham – they are close to the borough council, which is helped by Martin Quantock (the Cheltenham Town centre manager) sitting in their offices. They sponsor a day at the cricket each year and are looking to increase their membership offer. Jon thinks that joint events are the way forward.

5. **Summary of Action Points**

- Add each other to newsletters and distribution lists.
- Advise GFirst & Gloucestershire LEP that main Chambers have agreed concordat representing over 500 companies across the County. County Chamber will act as point of contact, communication to be passed on.
- Review membership of Executive for County Chamber
- Town chambers to look at membership of County Chamber
- County Chamber to look at associate membership for Town chambers
- Look to involve each other in events etc
- Send notes of meeting and contact details to all Chambers
- Arrange quarterly meetings across the County

Contact List:

Chamber	Primary Contact	Telephone	Email	Personal Email	Website
Cheltenham	Pauline Harris / Jon Leamon	01242 252626	info@cheltenhamchamber.org.uk		www.cheltenhamchamber.org.uk
Cirencester	Jonathan Davies	07896 267738	secretary@ccoc.org.uk		www.ccoc.org.uk
Gloucester	Mark Boyce	0845 2712844	info@glos-chamber-trade.com		www.glos-chamber-trade.com
Gloucestershire	Kirsty Watts / Suzanne Hall- Gibbins	01242 308022	info@gloschamber.co.uk	Kirsty.watts@gloschamber.co.uk Suzanne.hall-gibbins@businesslinksw.co.uk	www.gloschamber.co.uk
Stroud	Carole Garfield	07776 144033	Carolegarfield350@hotmail.com		http://community.stroud.gov.uk/default.asp?pid=32
Tewkesbury	Shelby Powell / David Bloxham	01684 299633	tewkesburychamber@gmail.com		www.tewkesburychamber.org.uk