



Cirencester Chamber of Commerce

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 11th December 2008

Present: Simon King (SK), Karen Gaisford (KG), Simon Musgrove-Wethey (SMW), Jonathan Davies (JD), Maggie Parker (Minutes Secretary)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Mike Johnson, Peter Stringfellow, Andrew Frazer, David Fowles, Simon Large and Roger Brown.

2. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes from the November meeting were approved and accepted with any points raised being covered below.

3. **Correspondence and Feedback from President**

Feedback from the President: **SK** originally agreed to take the role of President on until Christmas and to review at that point. From his point of view he is happy to stay on in the role until the next AGM when it would be good to appoint a successor from within the business community. Whilst there is a role for academia within the Chamber, and **SK** would want to stay on the committee in the future, he feels that it is primarily a business group and may be better served by having a President from that area.

It was agreed that the Chamber needed to consider its strategy and a meeting will be arranged for early January to brainstorm the future of both the Chamber and the committee from the point of view of:

- What is the Chambers focus
- How can businesses be encouraged to become more active
- What is the marketing and membership strategy
- What are the benefits of membership and how can these be enhanced
- What is the Chambers identity and how can people be encouraged to join the committee
- How does the Chamber effectively link in with the towns initiatives such as the Future of Cirencester and how can it ensure that comments made on its behalf are cohesive with its overall aim and focus

This meeting will be facilitated by an outside person to ensure that it is impartial and kept relevant and to the point.

Correspondence received:

Invitation from the Neighbourhood Partnership (Chesterton, Beeches and Watermoor) – **GR** offered to attend

Dates received from Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce with regard to future events – KG has put them all onto the website if anyone would like to attend.

SK to attend the next breakfast meeting 18 December in Cheltenham.

Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce sent details of its AGM held at the end of November and a press release - it is looking to merge with GWE Business West – a Bristol and Swindon based organisation.

JD – looking at the future – what is the benefit of being affiliated to the Gloucestershire Chamber? Should we be looking at affiliation to the British Chamber of Commerce instead?

SK to find out more information at the breakfast meeting and feedback to the committee.

Letter from CDC regarding making our members aware of the forthcoming changes to small business rate relief

KG to put information into next newsletter

Draft Gloucestershire Economic Strategy 2008 – 2015 document received – for review and comment by March 2009

KG to send to **JD** who will prepare a summary for the February meeting. **KG** to also send copy of the document to **SK**.

CTC have written to **SK** asking for a meeting in January to discuss next years Advent festival (see comments under point 7).

4. **Updates**

Cirencester Community Plan (formally Market & Coastal Towns Initiative):

SK has received an email and information regarding some issues on the consultants handling of the stage 1 research from **DF**.

The Chamber is represented by **DF**, **PS** and **JD** but **SK** has concerns that there is not enough feedback coming through to the committee.

Cirencester Town Council:

Nothing discussed

Cotswold District Council:

JD was asked by the press to comment on car parking since CDC took over the policing of on-street parking. In the last year that the police had overall charge approximately 2500 tickets were issued within the Cotswold/Stroud area. Since CDC took over last year approximately 5000 tickets have been issued in the Cotswold area alone. Since car parking charges have increased more people are chancing on street parking if they just need to pop to a shop or the bank and CDC are very diligent in their monitoring of parking infringements. **JD** commented that it would be good for CDC to look at their overall parking strategy and to consult the Chamber. The free Saturday parking in the lead up to Christmas is a great initiative but has been poorly promoted which has lead to confusion with people not knowing about it.

Gloucestershire County Council:

Nothing discussed

Other external organisations:

Nothing discussed

5. **Committee Structure and Roles**

There was general discussion about the need to get new blood onto the committee and the possibility of specialist working groups outside of the main committee to deal with specific issues.

This area will be discussed in more detail following the strategy meeting to be held in January.

6. **Finance**

KG handed out an up to date financial summary. There is one new member and a couple of interested people following last night's network event. There has been an increase in funds of £60 since the last meeting.

Advent:

- The cheque for the lights (£10,500) has gone today.
- All sponsorship money is now in
- Final money from the collection tins is due in January but is not expected to yield a huge amount
- Advertising revenue – **KG** spoke with **DF** today, the majority of the advertising raised no revenue as it was part of the 3 year deal that sponsors had signed up to last year. We have paid £350 for the printing but it looks like we won't get any revenue out of it.
- £95 was raised at last night's network event through the raffle

7. **Advent/Other Events**

The debrief meeting for the Advent Committee has been held.

CTC have asked to meet with the Chamber to discuss the future of the event but the Chamber needs to understand what they will take on, finance issues etc. It was agreed that the Chamber would be willing to hand over money already raised and to offer to help with the running of the event but that it does not want to be involved in future fund raising.

KG is to meet with Gala Lights next week to discuss the issues around this year's lights and to seek replacements/refund as appropriate.

KG, SK and MJ to attend the Advent meeting with CTC 19 January

Beer Festival – this year's event will be held over the May bank holiday weekend and will be at the Vaults as part of a music event. It is hoped that this can be developed into a Cirencester Festival including local produce and crafts and getting local suppliers, the Farmers Market and the Craft Market involved. The Chamber could help with lobbying for free parking and getting local businesses on board in a co-ordination role.

8. Membership

It was felt unlikely that **AF** would attend any future meetings but his work on membership should not be lost but should be built on for the future.

There will be no increase in membership fees this year and it is important that the benefits of membership are defined and communicated.

9. Marketing

To be discussed in detail following the strategy meeting

10. Events and Networking

Last nights meeting went well and was well attended. It would appear that specialist venues are a good option and the aim will be to hold meetings at outside venues at least once a quarter.

The Chamber has been approached by a number of people who would like to speak at future events, it was decided that speakers should generally be members and that their talk should be of interest i.e. what is their business strategy, how did they get where they are, top tips for business etc

11. Communications

To be discussed following strategy meeting.

KG to look at newsletter for the New Year

12. Website/IT

The website needs refreshing and having considered the user stats it is possible to identify key areas that need working on specifically. The Chamber does not currently use the website to generate income although there are opportunities available and it should be sold as a membership benefit with additional advertising opportunities available at a cost.

This area will be discussed in detail following the strategy meeting.

SMW to forward ideas and stats information to all committee members

13. Any Other Business

SMW showed a discount 'passport' that he had bought for £3.00 at the University of London. The idea was discussed and it was felt that this was a possible benefit for members and that it could be an income generator. The overall size (credit card) was good and it if it could incorporate a map of the town along with discount offers then it would be a useful thing for businesses to support. Costs vary depending on the print run but revenue could be raised via advertising.

SMW to prepare a costed business case for the strategy meeting

14. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Network Meetings

Committee Meetings

2009

January	14th	29th
February	11th	26th
March	11th	26th
April	8th	23rd
May	13th	28th
June	10th	25th
July	15th (AGM)	30th
No meeting in August		27th
September	9th	25th
October	14th	29th
November	11th	26th
December	9th	17th

15.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm