



## Cirencester Chamber of Commerce

### Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Present: Simon King (SK), Karen Gaisford (KG), Simon Musgrove-Wethey (SMW), Jonathan Davies (JD), Mike Johnson (MJ), David Fowles (DF), Maggie Parker (Minutes Secretary)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Roger Brown, Simon Large, Peter Stringfellow

2. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

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

3. **Correspondence and Feedback from President**

No correspondence received in period.

**SK** – thanked everyone for their input into the strategy meetings. A document has been produced and circulated to all committee members with the agenda and will be discussed later in the meeting.

**SK** – has been working on a bid for funds to develop initiatives which would tie in with the Future of Cirencester work. See comments later in the minutes.

4. **Updates**

Cirencester Town Council:

**SL** – not at the meeting

**DF** – comment on the front page of the Standard last week – CTC have agreed to fund 1/3 of the cost of the Market Place Initiative, and GCC have allocated a further £60K - £100K. CTC have received a large sum of money (£60K) which it plans to use on the Market Place. At this time there are no further details but it should be on the agenda of the next Future of Cirencester meeting (date of meeting to be confirmed). The draft response document from Hyder Consulting is due tomorrow and the next working group meeting will be looking at ways to move things forward but the positive thing is that there appears to be some serious funding available for the project.

Cotswold District Council:

Car parking – **JD** had a response from Mark Tuffnel with regard to the the stats for the last 3 years and he and **DF** are due to meet with Mr Tuffnel on Monday to discuss prior to arranging a bigger meeting to look at the issues. One of the topics to be discussed will be who should be involved in any future meeting.

**SMW** commented that he paid just 80p to park for two hours in Stroud. There then followed some discussion on the stats that had been provided and **JD** pointed out some key points:

- over 72% of the total profit CDC makes on car parking comes from Cirencester
- car parking provides a total income of £1.7m over the whole of the Cotswold area

- each car parking space in Cirencester provides £582 per annum profit

Whilst there are some valid points for argument the Chamber must approach any meeting with an open mind and look to make suggestions for a future strategy which will not lead to any cut in revenue for the CDC.

**KG** – has received communications from members regarding car park charges and it should be noted that there is an area on the CDC website where comments and feedback regarding charges can be logged.

It was decided that the Chamber should encourage all of its members to post their comments on the site and should also make a formal statement.

The deadline for comments is 13 March 2009.

**JD** did an interview with BBC Gloucestershire today with regard to the effect the Cheltenham Festival has on the town.

Trees – **JD** has written to the CDC with regard to the Capalta Square trees registering the Chambers discontent with the way things were handled and asking them to inform the

Chamber when things like this are going to happen in the future.

**DF** – there is a comment in today's Standard from John Birch with regard to future strategy. These trees were dangerous but poor communication has led to the issues that have been experienced. There is a real need to get the CDC to engage with the Chamber with regard to future issues in order to improve the communication channels.

**DF** – commented on the sad news with regard to the death of Bob Austin, the former Chief Executive of CDC.

**DF** – the council tax for 2009/10 has been set at just below 3%. However there will be a budget deficit of £1.5m over the next 3 years (£0.5m/year) due to increased service costs, pension costs etc., and CDC is looking at ways to address this by increasing income from things like car parking and leisure centre charges and making savings by restructuring. There will be no recruitment taking place and some redundancies and/or redeployment of staff. It has been confirmed today by the Government that the £2m invested in the Icelandic banks is to be underwritten by the Icelandic Government so there will be no loss incurred.

CDC is currently looking for new initiatives for use of capital rather than investing it (Invest to Save Scheme) and this is where the Chamber could have an impact. They want business ideas that will generate a better than 5% return on investment.

Gloucestershire County Council:

See comment under CTC.

**JD** – has received the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Draft Consultation document and is preparing the comments to be returned. Basically:

- very biased towards larger towns and cities with little for the rural community and hardly any mention of Cirencester
- the Cotswolds appears to be very low priority
- too vague – lots of 'blue sky' thinking
- mission statement not appropriate
- training – a need to assess what local businesses actually want. Too much emphasis on NVQ's with no appreciation of the difference between the training needs of rural areas as opposed to towns.
- No involvement or mention of the RAC
- too much emphasis on sustainable transport, park and rides etc. with no appreciation of the difficulties of finding public transport in rural areas and the

reliance and importance of the car to people who have no other options available to them

It was generally agreed that it is important that the Chamber comments on the document in order to raise the profile of the town and to confirm that we are central to passing on information to our members and the town and feeding back comments.

Other external organisations:

**DF** – commented that Gloucester 1<sup>st</sup> has a new Chief Executive – David Owen

**SK** – confirmed that this was already known and that Mr Owen was on the list to be invited to future network events.

5. **Our Future Cirencester**

**JD** – there has not been a working group meeting since September, the January meeting was the Hyder presentation which was not very good. **AP** has already fed back to the Chamber. **JD** has passed the minutes to **SK**.

**SK** – keen to see the draft report.

**DF** – **AP** is expecting to receive the Hyder report tomorrow, there has been a lot of criticism about the handling of the project to date. Once the report is in a date will be set for review and the creation of an action plan. **JD/PS** represent the Chamber so will circulate the report as soon as possible, The next meeting should be held within the next couple of weeks.

**DF** – has fed back that **PS** wants to remain involved and it should be noted that if others would like to get involved they would be welcome. There are not enough Cirencester people involved on the working group and it is important to increase the numbers.

**JD** – commented that there would be 3 or 4 key areas coming out of the work group that would need the involvement of others.

**SK** – currently working on a funding bid to the Educational Funding Councils Economic Challenge Investment Fund which is designed to help business during the current economic downturn. The aim is to secure £0.5m in funding via the RAC's bid. Bids can be made either singularly or in collaboration and there are 40 x £.5m bids available for single applications and 10 x £1m for collaborative applications. All bids have to be in by midday tomorrow with the results due by 23 March. All projects have a start date of 1 April and will last for 18 months. Bids require matched funding – which has been secured.

**SK** has looked at the Hyder initiatives to consider what the college could deliver via the Chamber and has come up with the following:

- Business2Business Trade Fairs – promoting local businesses
- Instructive and motivational seminars for local businesses (CPD)
- Local business learning networks – establishing specialist groups similar to Cirencester College's Academies.

6. **Chamber Strategy**

**SK** – asked for feedback and comments on the document which had been circulated. The overall feeling of the group was that we just need to get on and act on the defined actions. **SK** agreed but stated that it was important that there was a plan in place to manage things as we cannot allow them to slide. Where it is stated that actions must be completed by the end of a month then that relates to the date of the committee meeting in that month (i.e. Anyone with actions to be completed by the end of March will be expected to have them completed and be available for comment at the March committee meeting).

There followed some discussion with regard to presenting the strategy to members. It was decided that the basic strategy would be presented at the March network

event. Stephanie Allison will be invited along to give a short presentation on SWOT analysis and then all delegates present would be encouraged to complete a SWOT analysis document in order to gain valuable feedback which should be embedded within the document. There will be no business card draw at this event, instead all completed analysis documents will be used to encourage people to fill them in.

**JD** – happy to update with regard to car parking etc if there is time but the analysis is the priority

#### 7. **Future Committee Structure and Roles (incorporating part of 10 Membership)**

There are a few new members trickling in, membership now stands at 110 in total.

**SK** – still trying to encourage people to join the committee. We probably would have enough at the moment if everybody turned up to meetings. If people are going to be on the committee there has to be some commitment – we need some more 'doers'.

The current constitution allows for those committee members who fail to attend a certain number of meetings not to be allowed to re stand and this rule may be invoked in the future. There are people who have shown an interest in getting involved and they should be encouraged. The committee roles will be restructured against the strategy document deliverables.

**KG** – is struggling at the moment doing the secretarial and financial roles and is looking for someone to take over arranging speakers etc for the network meetings. After some discussion **SMW** volunteered to do this in the short term.

#### 8. **Finance**

**MJ** – raised the issue of insurance which is now due. Previously the Chamber took out a policy with 3<sup>rd</sup> party cover for the Advent Festival at a cost of £700+ per year (with £5m 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability cover). He has been offered a policy for £350 with a reduced cover of £1m but the question was raised – is this required if the Chamber is no longer dealing with the Advent Festival?

After discussion it was decided not to renew the policy at this time and to seek legal advice as to whether the Chamber requires any form of insurance.

#### 9. **Advent/Other Events**

**KG** and **GR** to meet with CTC tomorrow to discuss the future of the Advent Festival. Should it be confirmed that CTC are happy to take it over then the Chamber will forward all funds to them. Last years Advent committee has indicated that it would be happy to remain in place to work alongside CTC to provide manpower and expertise but this will be separate from the Chamber.

It was decided that CTC would have full control over the funds and that the Chamber would have no further input into the event.

**JD** – once everything has been agreed we should issue a joint press release and a constant contact mailing to let people know what is happening.

#### 10. **Membership (see also 7 above)**

**KG** - The renewal letters will be going out next week. Some subscriptions have already been received on direct debits.

It was decided that only one membership card will be issued per business.

11. **Marketing**

Nothing discussed.

12. **Network Meetings**

Moira Mann – President of the South Cotswolds FSB – has asked if the Chamber would be interested in holding joint events with them.

**KG** – Due to a communication issue we are no longer able to hold the AGM at Stratton House Hotel as planned. The Organic Farm Shop are an option (although not yet members) as they are keen to host an event, however can all committee members consider venues that could be used.

13. **Communication**

The issue of charging businesses for using the Chambers directory information was discussed. This is an important revenue stream for the Chamber and it was decided that we will carry on charging businesses for the information.

14. **Website/IT**

To be discussed following completion of strategy.

15. **Any Other Business**

**DF** – confirmed that his offices will be relocating to new premises at 45 Dyer Street over the weekend.

**KG** – what is happening with regard to the new magazine as copy has been produced for it?

**DF** – Cotswold Biz Ads is being worked on and will include some limited editorial including the Chamber page.

The membership to Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce is due for renewal. It was decided not to renew at this stage as **KG** is still trying to get some clarification of the benefits of membership. **KG** has also emailed GWE to enquire about direct affiliation with them.

**Dates of Future Meetings**

**Network Meetings**

**Committee Meetings**

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