



MINUTES

GENERAL Meeting

13th November 2014

The Berry Head Hotel

1830-20:30hrs

Apologies

Shaun Glover
Christine Jaffa

Executive Attendees

Keith Williams **KW**
Pauline Neal **PN**
Mike Franchi **MF**
Angela George **AG**
Jacqui Shaw **JCS**
Jo Choppin **JC**
John Ingram **JI**
Simon James **SJ**
Nigel Makin **NM**

Main Business

KW – paid a warm tribute to Chamber Executive and Pirate Festival Organiser, Brian Pearce, who sadly passed away recently.

Welcome Guest speaker : Dr Sarah Wollaston, MP

KW warmly welcomed Dr Wollaston and posed a question to Dr Wollaston about what Government is doing to help small retail businesses as all the government funding had meant that tourism budgets and other budgets were being cut .

Dr Wollaston explained how in 2010 the government set out its plans

- Roads – Kingskerswell Bypass
- Business Rates
- Employment Tribunals
- Fuel
- Red tape

The Kingskerswell bypass

- is well on track to open end of 2015.

Dr Sarah Wollaston led a very interesting and interactive discussion with Chamber members on the key points that government had set out in its manifesto.

Business Rates

Government has introduced a business rate £1000 rebate and a more flexible rating system.

Improved access to finance has also been encouraged by government. Dr Wollaston asked Chamber members if the rate initiatives had helped them in their business. Feedback suggested that this was a positive initiative but there were still many issues on the high street with charity shops being able to trade without the high rates and rentals charged by landlords and this was felt to be very unfair to established retailers who struggled to remain viable.

There are still too many high financial business costs.

Rates appeals process

has been shortened with the intention to clear the long backlog. Chamber members had mixed responses to individual appeals and 1 member had paid £500 to an agent to appeal his rates and did not get any response abck from the government department .

Dr SW suggested that Chamber members with specific examples to email her.

Action :MF from the Chamber will set up a link on the website.

Access to finance

Feedback to Dr SW was that many small businesses would not even consider going to a bank for finance and there were examples of businesses being refused finance even though they were an established successful business.

Also there had been issues where banks had called in the debt early.

Dr SW informed the group that a new access to finance scheme, Growth Vouchers , had been established to provide £2000 grants to small businesses.

A link will made available on the Chamber website.

This scheme is a pilot and participants will be assessed and monitored to gauge the value of the scheme before full implementation.

Utility Companies

AG raised the issue of mis-selling by a utility company and how the business owner had no redress and no cooling off period. The utility company would only stop the contract for a large fee. Dr SW will raise this at Government level.

Employment Tribunals

Another government initiative has been to correct the past imbalance between the employee and the employer at tribunals, which employers felt was unfair. Benefits of this have yet to be appreciated by Brixham Chamber members

However a Chamber member raised an issue regarding apprenticeship schemes which do not go far enough in supporting small organisations, who have limited workforce and cannot dedicate the necessary supervision time needed by apprentices and suggested a similar scheme for graduates who could be taken on to support their employment opportunities and provide the organisation with an opportunity to further train the individual without too much supervision being required.

Harry Bower commented that young people leaving the area for university were unlikely to come back due to lack of employment and career opportunities.

Dr SW reminded members that there is NI tax exemption for employees under 21yrs of age.

Parking Charges

This was raised by members as an ongoing issue that impacts upon retailers and businesses.

Short stay car parking costs are high and deter visitors and residents from shopping etc.

Car Parking Permits -PN mentioned the value of having a parking permit that enables free car parking in any Torbay Town council car parks between 1500-1000hrs. This costs only £50 per year and encourages people to shop and do business locally.

This scheme needs to be promoted or we are in danger of losing it.

It was suggested that Councils rely on car parking revenue and Dr SW suggested that this should not happen. It was agreed that through the freedom of information act that Chamber could review what revenue was being generated by Torbay Council from the car parks in Brixham.

The topic of car parking was passionately discussed and alternative options of Park and Ride were also muted, again this is not always the most economically viable solution and a Multi- story car park would be far too expensive and complex to build and not be economically sustainable.

After a very interactive and open discussion Dr S Wollaston was warmly applauded and thanked by the members.

Chamber Business

Executive member feedback

Finance – PN updated the members Over £6000 in the Chamber account.

- 116 members

Retail Group- NM

The new LoveBrixham retail brochure is being distributed to every household in TQ5 and it is intended that other editions will be produced.

- 22ND November -Free Car Parking after 5pm
- Late Night shopping 4th Dec
- New Quay Inn now open following a refurbishment.
- Costa Coffee soon opening and Salt Rock

Website- MF

MF Shared the latest figures re the number of Brixham businesses

More updates being made to the website including a retail section.

Database of all Brixham businesses is ongoing

Still lots of businesses to be reached and potential for more new members.

Media / PR -AG

Producing regular news items and recently published members include

- Hob Nobbs
- Lynne Peets
- The Guardhouse

Membership – First corporate member to join is Stagecoach

Tourism -GG

- New Tourism Banners produced
- Threshers site – a large hoarding will be draped from the scaffolding but there have been issues regarding costs currently awaiting resolution but expects the banner to go up by the end of November.

Sunday Market- JC

8 Sunday markets held – raised £4330, marketing expenditure costs mean there is a net profit for the Chamber £2000

Arts and Craft Market- JI

- Increasing the number of stall next year to 16
- Monies raised from the market =£5000
- Discussions with Harbour master ongoing re next years costs etc.

The meeting was closed at 21:00 hrs

Dates of next meeting will be circulated to executive and made available on the Chamber Website.

1. Executive Members updates

- **Membership JS**

- 108 members to date and new members were welcomed to the Chamber.

- **Treasury JS**

- Over £5000 currently in the Chamber funds
- Discussed renewal payment of £189.80 to continue link with PCOC as an associate member of the British Chamber of Commerce.
- It was agreed that this would be of value to Brixham Chamber and its members- JS to pay PCOC

- **Retail Group- NM**

- High St clean very successful
- In discussions with TOR2 regarding proposed services to Brixham
- Benches in central car park are to be repaired
- Database is in development
- Working group needs some more members as several have had to leave due to personal reasons.
- 20% of our high st is up for sale
- Tesco will be undergoing a refurbishment in the near future

- Good news – Colours of Brixham have established a pop up shop and Angels and Feathers have opened in the Quayside.
- Central car park site usage and options still being discussed and led by TDA
- **Media /Website MF**
 - Website: There have been over 24000 website visits
- **Marketing AG**
 - AG is producing articles with a focus on good business /retail news stories featuring local Brixham businesses
 - Simon James of Hobb Nobs will be featured in the local press as he has just bought the lease for his shop and business.
 - Anyone with new business stories please contact AG
- **Sunday Markets JC –**
 - Last Sunday market cancelled due to inclement weather
 - JC proposed holding an additional market on Sunday August Bank Holiday and asked the members for their opinions
 - The majority, bar 1 member, of those members present agreed that this additional market should go ahead and many were in favour of the market because their business had benefitted from it. A vote was taken and the proposal carried.
- **Pirate festival**
 - KW informed the members that the framework for next years Pirates festival was being developed

KW - The Chamber members asked that best wishes for a speedy recovery were passed onto BP who was unable to attend due to illness as was GG who also was unable to attend due to illness.

Date and times for 2014 Executive and General meetings.

Meeting closed at 21:00hrs

Next Executive meeting: Tuesday 14th Oct Planning and Strategy Meeting
Next General Meeting: November 13TH 18:30hrs Berry Head Hotel **Please note: Members only and invited Guests.** Guest Speaker: Dr Sarah Wollaston MP