



# **BODMIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**

*— Building a better Bodmin in Business for the Community*

## **Minutes of General Chamber meeting held on Zoom on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 6pm**

**Meeting ID: 814 9798 3212 Passcode: 682164    The meeting was recorded on Zoom**

**Present: Joy Bassett, Carol Randall, Paul Miles Rogers, Phill Gale, Jane Tily, Phil Taylor, Phil Brown, Martin Hemmerle, Rob Wood**

**Apologies from Paula Hutchens, Balu Madhvani, Ray Veerman**

### **Minutes**

Minutes of the last meeting have been circulated and were accepted as an accurate record. There were no matter arising other than those in the agenda of this meeting.

### **Registration and Accreditation at British Chamber for Kickstart Scheme Update**

Joy explained that as she embarked on the registration process for Companies House, she accidentally stumbled on the fact that to register as a Chamber, we will need to overcome some additional hurdles. These include getting a letter of approval from Cornwall Chamber, which is our accredited County Chamber and paying British Chamber a fee of £500 to process our accreditation application. Joy said that she thought it was a good investment but that it was necessary to discuss to make sure that this course of action was supported by Chamber members.

Carol said that the Kickstart Programme is what Chamber should be doing by helping employers to help young people to find employment. Also, that for each placement we would receive a £300 payment to cover admin costs which is a great revenue raising opportunity. She added that it was also an opportunity for us to take Bodmin Chamber to the next level with the capacity to provide support and leadership to the local businesses that is needed. There is only so much that can be achieved by people doing things in their spare time.

A long discussion followed with Phil Brown being generally supportive of the plan to get registered and accredited as it could be the catalyst that Chamber needs to get recognition in Bodmin. However, he has reservations about whether we will get 30 placements for the Kickstart scheme and if we cannot get the 30, we need we will be out of pocket. He also said it will be a lot of work and asked if Carol is happy to do this as a paid role to which Carol agreed. He said that he thought it was too complicated and that would put employers off.

Several questions about how many placement we have as early expressions of interest. Carol explained that we have 15 placements but that as we have this hurdle to overcome, she has not been marketing it at all. She also explained that 1 placement opportunity can be applied for to start at different times and will count as a different placement. So, for example, a placement starting in December 2020, then in June 2021 and again in December 2021 will count as 3 placements for the 30 minimum.

Carol said she was confident that employers would do it if we can make it easier for them. This was why she asked Paula at Amber Consultancy and Training to put together a training and mentoring programme for employers to use to deliver the required training for the participants of the Kickstart Scheme. This will be

offered to employers by Chamber as a recommended option. Employers can choose not to use this programme but will have to provide evidence that they are delivering the required training in some way. Carol will also be designing template forms that will make the application process much easier for the employer.

Joy felt that the incentives for the employer are attractive. They get £1500 as a one-off payment for each placement and all wage and wage related costs are reimbursed for a 25 hour per week.

Jane asked if educational establishments like colleges can apply and thought that 2 placement will reimburse the £500 investment for the accreditation. Carol confirmed that any type of organisation can apply for placements.

Phil Brown added that there is no commitment from the employer to provide a job, that this is just work experience and that it would be difficult to train very much in 6 months for a more complex role. Phil Gale agreed that although he would like to offer a placement, he could not teach them much in 6 months. Carol said that she attended the Federation of Small Business webinar on Kickstart and there was a speaker representing the Apprenticeship programme and she was hoping placements could be developed into apprenticeships for the right candidate. Apprenticeships are more complicated as there must be a training provider involved. Carol acknowledged that it would be difficult for Phil as there are no local horology courses available.

Rob asked if supermarkets care permitted to join. Carol confirmed they can, but they will do their own applications and Tesco has applied for 1000 placements nationally.

Phil Brown said he could not understand why the Government had made it so complicated as less than 10% of Cornish businesses will have more than 10 employees so large majority will have to use an intermediary.

Joy said Cornwall Chamber are participating as an intermediary and have their first 30 placements already and now also have 5 additional ones. Joy had suggested that we could process those for them if they do not get another 30 and they were in favour. She also mentioned that Wadebridge Chamber are also going for accreditation to participate in the scheme.

Carol reiterated that she thought we would get 30 but that if we do not sort this registration issue out quickly, we will be completely left behind and will miss out on this opportunity. She mentioned that Scott Mann has written a letter of support to help us get approved as an intermediary.

Phil Taylor asked Phil Brown if the £500 was around 20 % of our account balance. Phil Brown confirmed it was and added that we have spent nothing for the last two years. Phil Taylor said he is completely convinced about the merits of this but as the £500 is only about 20% of our account balance, he felt it is affordable and would be worth the investment given the potential benefits and so felt we should go ahead. Phil Brown agreed.

Joy added that there would be additional cost for an accountant if we register.

Phil Brown said nothing ventured, nothing gained; the money is sitting there doing nothing so he would vote in favour.

Phil Gale offered to pay towards the £500 and Phil Brown said, although that was commendable it was not necessary as we have the funds. We inherited £1500 from the old Chamber so need to put it to work.

Jane said that she is a member of the Board of Directors for Better Bodmin and said how complicated and time consuming it was when they had to do the money laundering check.

Phil Brown did suggest that we could approach Wadebridge if they are doing it too to do it together. Carol said we need to get ourselves registered as an intermediary before we can do much, but it would be something to bear in mind if we have problems getting enough placements.

Martin said that as there is a small element of risk it is a very beneficial thing to do, especially if Carol is prepared to do the work. He said it was important that Chamber should get involved to help create employment and opportunities for young people. He said that he could not see a downside and was a no brainer.

Rob asked if the money must be paid back if the placement does not work out e.g. if the young person does not show up for work or is, in some other way, unsatisfactory. Carol said her understanding is that the employer is at liberty to end the placement but would need to explain the reason to the Job Centre who referred the candidate. She said she does not think the money would have to be repaid as that money is to pay for any set up costs like uniform, equipment etc so the money would have been spent.

Joy added that Paula' training and mentoring programme might help with this as she would be building a relationship with the young person and could help.

Carol said that she had spoken to Alison Perrin, Head of Foundation Learning at Bodmin College about the Kickstart Programme and Alison had spoken to her DWP contact in St Austell who told Alison that there were a lot of young people in Bodmin who would benefit from the scheme.

Joy also mentioned Jane Smith from Bodmin College who may well still know of students who have left who need jobs.

Phil Gale said the young person would have to have commitment going to work for 25 hours from doing nothing. Phil Brown added that he thought they should be prepared for a high drop-out rate as his experience of working with young apprenticeships was a drop-out rate of around 40 %.

Jane said that she would like to offer a place to give someone some experience of her work. She also felt it would be easier than having to deal with provisional contracts, appraisals etc that you normally have to go through.

Phil Taylor suggested that, as the meeting was quorate, we should agree in principle to go ahead but then put it the absentee members to see if there was a high level of objections.

Paul said that we had already had enough delays. He said that our package, with Paula's programme was an attractive one that should give us an advantage over others but the delay in registering has placed us behind the curve, so we need to make progress quickly now. Members have received emails and information over the last few weeks and knew that it was being discussed at this meeting. He was in favour of going ahead. He commented that it is a 2-year project, so we have time to catch up but need to move quickly now. Carol confirmed that the last placement would start in December 2021.

This prompted a short discussion of how best to get absentee members involved. Martin said that we should take a vote and go ahead if we are all in favour, as other members were asked to contribute and given the opportunity to comment and didn't so we can only assume that they don't have an interest.

Phil Brown proposed that if 75% or more voted in favour today we should accept the vote as passed. Joy seconded this. All were in favour

Joy proposed that we should go ahead with the registration at Companies House as discussed. Phil Brown seconded, and it was unanimously carried with all in favour.

**Action: Joy to follow up with Cornwall Chamber and the registration process**

### **Festival of Business Update**

Joy reminded about the Bodmin Chamber Networking Breakfast Session at the Cornwall Virtual Festival of Business. This Session will be at 8am on Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> November and the Eventbrite link is <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/121564307115>. She said that Scott Mann MP had agreed to come and was looking forward to learning about Bodmin's businesses.

The plan is for this to be a special edition of our Virtual Breakfast meeting and we will be asking some successful Bodmin businesses to speak about their business. The objective is for this networking session to showcase Bodmin as a place to do business.

The businesses we have participating are Flann Microwave (thanks to Phil Gale for his help with them), Bodmin Jail Hotel and Resort, Cornish Lime, Proper Cornish, Cornwall Dairy Vets, and Sandoes & Sons, a rural environmental company based in Nanstallon. All very note-worthy and should make an impressive showcase.

Paul asked Carol for an update of the details from the participants as he is keen to start marketing the event. Carol said she would send him an update

**Action: Carol to send Paul an email with update of participants and follow up any who have not responded**

**Action: Paul to do some social media marketing for this event**

**Action: Carol to send email to all members to remind them and for them to share with their contacts to make sure we have a good turnout.**

**Action: Carol to put the event on the Chamber Facebook Page**

**Action: All members to actively market this to their contacts – both with email and on Facebook**

### **Bodmin Virtual Market**

Joy announced that it had been decided to postpone the idea of a Christmas Market to be held in town centre on 5<sup>th</sup> December for Small Business Saturday because of the uncertainty about Covid restrictions. However, we are currently exploring the possibility of running a Virtual Market on Facebook from November to January to give local businesses a showcase for the Christmas shopping period and buyers a place to see what local shops have to offer.

Paul asked if any traders had been interested in the physical market. Joy said the ones she had spoken to were on a skeleton staff so would not have spare staff to man a stall and were focussing on online business.

The Facebook page would be complemented with a Twitter campaign to drive traffic to the Facebook page and the local businesses.

Carol had sent a discussion document to all members prior to the meeting (this is appended to these minutes as Appendix A)

Carol had spoken to Dave Birch, the editor of the new Bodmin way e- magazine who has an IT and communications background, who had done some great research and we are looking for a team of people

to help administer it. There was no real enthusiasm for this at the meeting, but Rob Wood volunteered to help. Martin also very kindly offered to donate a prize for a draw to get people to join the Group.

Carol suggested that we might speak with Mark Talbot to see if his students might participate in some way.

Paul suggested that we might speak to Louise Curry Brooks, who is interested in farmers markets.

**Action: Carol /Joy to meet again with Dave Birch to discuss way forward**

### **Window Sticker update**

Jane shared the window sticker design done by Al Shiner, a graphic designer contact of hers. There was general approval. It was thought to be modern and attractive and met everyone's approval. There was a conversation about the colours used as white works on a black background but would not work on a white page if used as a logo. It was agreed to replace the wording to Building a Brighter Bodmin by supporting Local Business. There was a discussion about the size needed for the sticker and Phil Taylor advised that it should be possible to be flexible with this.

Jane said that Al did not want any fee for this work.

**Action: Jane to feedback to Al Shiner**

### **Upcoming Meetings**

**Date of Next Business Breakfast Meeting – Cornwall Chamber Festival of Business Special - Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 8am**

Zoom ID: 832 6566 5802 Passcode: 051647

and **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November**, Zoom ID 817 7307 9033 Passcode: 766861

**Date of Next Chamber Meeting - Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November at 6pm**

Zoom ID: 814 9798 3212 Passcode: 682164

## **Appendix A – Virtual Market Document sent to all members prior to the meeting**

### **Bodmin Virtual Market of Facebook – Thoughts for Discussion**

#### **Background**

As you are aware, we have been working on the possibility of running a Christmas market in the town centre on December 5<sup>th</sup>. With the recent Covid developments we have made the decision to postpone a market until the Spring of next year.

We want the market to be a big success and there is currently so much uncertainty that we feel that this is the most prudent way forward. Several potential stall holders that we approached told us that they did not have the staff to man a stall anyway. As there is such lot of work to do to make the preparations and run the market, we want to make sure that we get the best possible outcome.

So, we have been doing some research about the possibility of setting up a Virtual Market on Facebook.

#### **Objectives**

Our objective would be to provide a 'Covid resistant' way for local businesses in the Bodmin area to let the local public know what they are selling and for the public to be encouraged to support their local businesses by offering a convenient and Covid secure way to browse what local businesses have on offer.

As we enter the Christmas season, we want to make sure that local businesses have support from local residents. This includes our town centre businesses as well as our nearby rural businesses.

#### **Basic Proposal for discussion**

To set up a Facebook Group called Bodmin Virtual Market to create a virtual market for local services, businesses, food producers and crafters in Bodmin and surrounding villages to connect with people and boost local shopping.

Bodmin Virtual Market would be supplemented with a Twitter campaign to help drive a lot of traffic and attention to the Facebook group. This will involve having a regular weekly tweet up that lasts for an hour and uses a hashtag such as #bodminmarket.

Hashtags can help categorise posts, increase engagement, attract followers to a certain niche, strengthen a brand image and help reach a target audience. The purpose of the hashtag is therefore to help people find posts relating to the hashtag. For example, a search on twitter for the #bodminmarket hashtag will bring up every tweet that has included that hashtag. Other hashtags may also be included in a tweet to attract attention to a product, a service, a place or even an attitude.

The idea is to run a focused #bodminmarket campaign for an hour every week, say 9am -10am on a Saturday morning.

Bodmin Virtual Market would run until the end of January 2021 when feedback and measures will be analysed with a view to continuing further in 2021.

The intention is to allow sellers to make direct connections to buyers by providing them the social media platform to showcase their goods, crafts, services, and special offers with signposts to their preferred online presence.

Sellers can post specific items for sale and create an album to showcase their work.

Bodmin Virtual Market would be free to buyers to join and browse the various sellers. They are also free to post any wants or items they are looking for. If they like what they see they can PM, the seller and make their own arrangements for payment and delivery. Bodmin Virtual Market would not play any part in accepting payment or delivery on behalf of businesses.

There is a one- off fee of £5, which will be free for Chamber members.

Having done some initial research, we are now keen to check out the demand for such a facility. It would require us putting together a team of people to run it on a voluntary basis and we know that some users have challenges with the technology aspects which require help and guidance.

If we are going to do this, we are going to have to do it quickly or there won't be any point in doing it, so we are trying to get as much feedback as quickly as possible.

### **The Benefits to a Business**

Advertising in print or online media can be expensive so we see this as offering local businesses an affordable way to showcase their business online in the run up to Christmas. Getting people to visit your website or Facebook page also requires a lot of work and technical expertise that many business owners do not have. Using the Bodmin Virtual Market would require some work and expertise but there would be support to help and exposure would be a lot greater through this channel.

The format that we are proposing would allow businesses to have an album showing products supplemented by up to 2 or 3 posts per day so that they can advertise anything including:

- New products
- Special offers and promotions
- Sale items
- Last chance to buy
- Opening hours, delivery info
- Testimonials

### **Research Findings – Cornish Craft Fairs example**

Dave Birch, who is editor of the Bodmin Way e-Magazine has been helping us with this and we are very grateful to him for this help. Dave originally contacted Chamber to see how, together, we might help support local businesses. He has put together a lot of detailed notes after taking a close look at a virtual market for Cornish crafter that has the catchy Group name of Cornish Craft Fairs UK Virtual 2020 Christmas Craft Fair. This was set up as a response to the situation where craft fairs are all being cancelled, and crafters have nowhere to sell their products. It has attracted hundreds of crafters who all have their own 'stall' and there is a huge amount of activity. It is a Public Group and has 1.7K members, as at 15/10/20.

Because of the success of this page, Dave contacted the organisers of the page to find out more about the challenges etc of running the page and they were very helpful outlining the key challenges they have faced.

Having had this contact we know that this initiative would need to have a team of perhaps up to 6 people to share the moderating work (working on sharing the load of about an hour per day). We would also need

to provide some technical guidance to people who are not tech-savvy. We were thinking of getting some bright young things to volunteer to help as a kind of work experience opportunity and also to get some guidance videos that people can view to see how to do things such as set up their albums and troubleshoot problems.