

MINUTES OF BODMIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS' MEETING (ON ZOOM)

27TH JULY 2020, 6 PM

Present: Joy Bassett, Phil Taylor, Phil Gale, Phil Brown, Carol Randall, Paul Miles Rogers, Rajesh Joshi, Martin Hemmerle, Alex Fraser, Jane Tily, Balu Madhvani

Apologies: None

Joy Bassett chaired the meeting. She thanked Carol for the AGM minutes and welcomed Jane as a new member.

She also welcomed Phil G as a new member of the Committee and asked him to explain what he does. Phil is a clock maker and restorer and specialises in clocks from the 1600 and 1700s. His skills are rare, and he is keen to find ways to pass on these skills but there is a problem as there are very few places where students can go to be trained.

Chair's Report for previous year was distributed to members before the meeting

Treasurers Report

Phil B reported that balance was £3203.89 upon receipt of more subscription fees

Membership Report

Phil T reported that 14 application forms have been received with payment and 2 payments received with no form (Balu and Paul MR identified themselves as those who had not yet submitted their forms). He said that he has had no response to his most recent email to the existing members that have been given a month's grace to renew.

Joy said that Phil Ugalde is intending to take two places, one for Proper Cornish and another for a new Proper Cornish Group company. Also, John Holman from Tanist is intending to renew.

There is a new member called Sam Ryan who joined through Facebook. His business is called Social Sloth Games and he has just returned to Bodmin following a couple of years living in Vietnam.

There was a short discussion about needing to sell the benefits of Chamber membership. Carol noted Alex's comment about sharing more of the Chamber's posts on the Bodmin Business Group page.

It was noted we could do more on Social media. Paul MR, who manages the Chamber's Twitter account, reported that we have 373 Twitter followers. Carol reported there are 154 likes and 186 followers on Chamber's Facebook page. Carol noted that we should have an Instagram account as this is used much more now to grow retail business.

Cornwall Channel

Joy said she had spoken to Shane Solomon and he had given her a date of 12th /13th August for the Chamber's first video/interview session. This was felt to be too short notice and the consensus was that we should ask to postpone, giving us more time to plan so that we do not waste the opportunity to make a powerful first impression. The majority supported asking for a date in September. Joy suggested a sub-group to meet on Zoom to brainstorm the contact for that first session. It was agreed for 6.30 pm on Monday 3rd August. The group consists of Rob Wood (proposed by Martin in his absence), Rajesh, Joy, Balu, Carol and Phil G.

Action: Joy to contact Shane for a date in September

Action: Joy to invite sub-group members to Zoom meeting

Action: Sub-group members to prepare some thoughts for key messages, ideas for content and attend meeting

Zoom Business Breakfast update

Joy reported that these have been a real success during Lockdown and continue to be useful. She thanked Paul who has been instrumental in organising them. The presence of Scott Mann on a monthly basis has been of real value.

Paul MR reported that the Eventbrite page for the upcoming meeting on the 4th August is now open.

Joy mentioned that both Scott Mann and Tim Dwelly, on Cornwall Council with responsibility for Culture, Economy and Planning, also for High Street Vitality and on the LEP Board, are expected on 4th August. Joy mentioned Jayne Kirkham's motion to get Cornwall Council to increase their local spend; Scott Mann has said he would support the motion, and we need to get Tim Dwelly to do the same. It is important for us to sustain a meaningful dialogue with these people to ensure that Bodmin gets its voice heard.

There was a discussion about renewable energy opportunities in Cornwall including the Wind and Wave Alliance (Peter Childs) and the proposed sale of the Wave Hub that is currently owned by Cornwall Council; it was noted that the latter have done nothing with it, so it is now just a white elephant. Paul MR mentioned the Wadebridge Renewal Energy Network that was set up to supply electricity to the less well off in Wadebridge. One of the issues in Cornwall is that the national grid is already overloaded. The St Dennis Energy Recovery Centre was mentioned, and Phil T mentioned that he had heard that 65 recycling centres in Cornwall are due to close, which caused some shock.

Carol reported that Dan Dicker from Circular & Co (www.circularandco.com) will be guest speaker at 1st September breakfast meeting. Dan left Dyson where he was an inventor to set up a company in Perranporth that makes products from waste products. Their principal product is an award-winning reusable cup made from single use paper cups. It will last for 10 years and can even go in the dishwasher. There was a short discussion about the fact that Cornwall is home to several businesses using waste products to make things. Paul MR reported that ATI has helped a company making bean bags with starch-based beads and one making kayaks from waste plastic harvested from Cornish beaches.

Paul asked Carol to send him Dan Dicker's details so he can put something on Twitter about it

Action: Carol to send Dan Dicker details to Paul MR

Safe Re-opening of Fore Street

Carol went through the document that she had previously circulated to members (attached) about the safe reopening plans for the town centre. Following the social media and other consultation it was felt that neither a road closure nor a one-way pavement scheme will work in Fore Street.

There was a long discussion that touched on all the issues in the document and specifically points were made:

Phil T and Phil B could not support moving people on to maintain a clear pavement as these people were doing nothing illegal but agreed that signs to achieve people moving on might work better.

Both Alex and Jane said that when they come into town, they park in a 30-minute spot and just pick up what they need and drive on. They do that because they do not have time to park in a car park and walk to the shops and Jane has a dog, she does not like to leave in the car on its own because of dog theft. They suggested that some do it to save time, but others do it just because they are lazy.

Alex said Mount Folly is already a nice place to sit and has nice granite benches. Carol pointed out that these benches are not practical for the elderly or infirm as they are too low and have no arms.

Jane suggested that an empty shop could be used as a gathering place. Joy said it would be necessary to get permission from the landlord.

Alex suggested that one of the problems with gatherings is that people stand and smoke

Martin suggested we speak to Bob Willingham, Bude Stratton's Mayor, as Bude has got a local security firm patrolling and that is working very well. He felt that this should not be the responsibility of the Chamber and that the Town Council should be taking the lead, as Bude Council has done.

Anti-Social Behaviour is a problem and people hanging around on the streets can be intimidating and does nothing to encourage people to come into town. This is a national problem. Alex suggested looking for towns that have been successful in tackling this problem and learning from them.

The parking problem is serious. Phil B mentioned that there are only 39 Civil Enforcement Officers in the whole of Cornwall and if you want to get them to come more often than scheduled you must pay them £39 per visit. Alex suggested encouraging more people to walk into town.

Paul MR said that he previously worked in Rugby and they had 6 town Rangers who dealt with tourists and, with the use of CCTV, helped monitor ASB; he didn't feel that only one person would be able to achieve very much.

Action: Carol to speak to Bob Willingham

Action: Carol to review proposals and amend

Small Business Saturday Discussion

Very few people had read the document about this that Carol circulated last week. It was generally agreed to be a timely and worthwhile thing to explore further but there was no discussion about any of the specific initiatives. It was agreed to start a folder in the Chamber Dropbox to which all Chamber members would have read access, and Phil T suggested that the best solution to allow multiple authorship would be to create a Wiki. It was asked whether this would involve "joining" something, and Phil confirmed that it would not.

Paul MR said he was really pleased to see the Tour Bus coming to Bodmin

Alex suggested a Flashmob be organised on the day. She has a friend who is a dancer who could organise it.

Action: Phil T to start a folder in Dropbox for this purpose

Action: Carol to write to members to lead 'discussion' and information exchange

Economic Recovery – How we can inform and influence policy makers

Joy spoke about the need for us to be more proactive with Cornwall Council, LEP, politicians and anyone influencing policies to ensure that Bodmin is not excluded, which seems to be the case at the moment.

Barriers to High Street Vitality – Rent and Rates

Phil B and Paul MR suggested that rates is not an issue over which we can have any direct influence, but we can help larger organisations such as the FSB and British Chamber who lobby on this issue. This was agreed.

Joy had found out that Bricknells, 14 Fore Street, is owned by White Lodge Holdings, based in Surrey. 10, Fore Street, was Barnardo's, and 22 Fore Street are also owned by people who do not live in Bodmin.

Jane suggested that there are regulations requiring proper maintenance and duty of care to avoid accidents affecting the public, such as a slipping tile. She suggested there might be a way to at least encourage these landlords to make the empty premises more attractive.

Carol suggested that this is a topic to put to Tim Dwelly at the Breakfast Meeting as he is responsible for High Street Vitality.

Action: Carol/ Joy to raise this issue with Tim Dwelly at the Breakfast Meeting on 4th August

Plans and Priorities for 2020/2021

Time ran out so there was not any significant discussion about this. However, Paul MR did suggest that Chamber needs to redress the balance and do something for the many businesses in the industrial sites and not just focus on the High Street. Not only do these businesses employ more people than the High Street shops but it is where the real growth potential is for Bodmin. So, he suggested that the 2020/2021 plan should include two things to focus on, one for the High Street / Town Centre and one for the other businesses in Bodmin.

Carol agreed and added that our small business / shop local campaign would also be relevant for these areas as there are smaller businesses there too. There was general agreement that this needs to be explored.

Next Chamber meeting will be at 6pm on 17th August 2020

Joy closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their contributions.