



Hungerford Chamber of Commerce Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 6th February 2018 at the Royal British Legion club, Hungerford

Present:- David Small (Chair), Derek Loft (Treasurer), Frances Small (Membership Secretary), Penny Locke and Martin Crane (committee members), Keith Knight (Mayor of Hungerford), John Downe (Hungerford Town Councillor), and 13 members of the Chamber and their guests. Apologies had been received from Natalie Chappell, Jo Starr and Fiona Hobson.

1. Introductions – DS welcomed all in attendance at the meeting and at his invitation all present introduced themselves. It was noted with regret that Natalie Chappell (committee member) was unable to attend the meeting as a result of a motor accident and agreed that a bouquet of flowers be purchased for her in order to wish her well in her recovery from her injuries.

2. Chairman's address – DS summarised recent developments since the resignation of Christina Finlay as Chair last October, including his agreement to stand in as Chair until the next AGM, the formation of a new Committee and its meetings in October, November and January and a small increase in paid-up membership. He said that the Chamber still has an important role to play in the local community and that after a difficult last few months the outlook is now much more positive.

3. Treasurer's report – DL said that the Chamber has £750 in its general account and £8,200 in the Extravaganza account although there are some uncertainties as regards invoices which he hadn't received as emails addressed to the Treasurer are not finding their way to him. Also due to the cancellation of the Chamber's debit card the Chamber's website hosting company may not have been paid – he will phone them to make contact and arrange for payment to be made annually in advance (this should result in a discount).

4. Membership – FS said that membership has increased slightly from around 40 to 53 and she read out the names of those members who have joined in recent weeks.

5. Website – it was agreed that the Chamber website needs to be updated and made more responsive to social media. A discussion took place about whether to continue to pay i3 Web £30 per month for a microsite on the Hungerford Town website – views expressed were mainly against this but it was agreed to leave the decision to the Chamber committee. It was also agreed to restore the members' directory to the website as soon as possible.

6. Mayor's report – Keith Knight addressed the meeting about the Town Council's decision at its meeting on the previous evening to draw up a Neighbourhood Development Plan and said that a steering group will be formed in the next few weeks to take this forward. He explained the legal background to this under the Localism Act 2011, and that the process will take 2-3 years and will involve a local referendum. So far only one parish in West Berkshire (Stratfield Mortimer) has adopted an NDP but others have resolved to do so. A NDP has to be consistent with District Council planning policy so there will need to be significant liaison and negotiation with West Berkshire Council. The end result however will be a greater degree of protection for Hungerford from 'hostile' development applications and of future development being more in line with the expressed views of the local community.

Mr Knight also briefed the meeting about the imminent assumption of responsibility of Hungerford Town Council for the town's public library, with a draft 99-year lease in the process of being drawn up and an official opening event planned to take place in April. This follows a proposal by West Berkshire Council last year to close the library and the formation of a body of Friends of Hungerford Library volunteers which had campaigned successfully to save it.

7. The 'Pigeon problem' – DS said that he had accepted an invitation to represent the Chamber at a meeting due to take place tomorrow in the Town Hall to discuss this. It was noted that only two Chamber members present operated from High Street premises and that neither of them were unduly concerned about the problem. Ds agreed to report back at the next Chamber meeting.

8. The Tourist Initiative – DS briefed the meeting on the various initiatives taken over the past few years to market Hungerford more effectively as a destination for visitors and tourists, including the 'Marketing Hungerford' working party which met regularly under Anthony Buckwell's chairmanship in 2011-12, leading to the Benchmarking report commissioned from Action for Market Towns in 2013, the consequent formation of Town Team Hungerford and its production and distribution of a range of very good leaflets promoting the town's attractions, and the formation of the Town Council's Tourism and Economy Committee which continues to meet regularly and is chaired by Martin Crane. It was agreed that more needs to be done and that further discussions will take place at the next meeting of the T&E Committee next Monday, which DS and Jane Goldstein will attend.

9. Future programme of events – it was agreed that the Chamber needs to formulate a programme of future social events and this will be discussed further at the next Chamber committee meeting, which will take place next month, with members not on the Committee being welcome to attend (date and venue to be confirmed) Suggestions made by those in attendance at the meeting included a canal boat trip and a visit to the Ramsbury Brewery. It was also agreed to circulate all Chamber members to seek their views

DS also referred to the monthly networking meetings organised by Natalie Chappell, Penny Locke and Jo Starr at the Three Swans Hotel, the next being due to take place on the evening of Tuesday 20th February from 5.30 pm onwards, with all welcome to attend.

10. AGM – DS said that this will take place in April, details and venue to be confirmed and circulated to all Chamber members.

11. Any Other Business – questions were raised at the meeting and answered by DS and MC about the former Hungerford Police Station building (shortly to be converted into flats), the closure of the Nat West Bank branch in Hungerford and the future of the former Oakes Brothers site. A request was also made for the Chamber's notice board under the railway bridge to be used more effectively, to include minutes of recent meetings to be displayed.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Signed as a true record of the meeting

David Small
Chairman