



STAFFORD CHAMBER

MINUTES OF THE 29th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 18th November 2019, at 5pm – Held at Stafford Chamber

Members In attendance:

- Phil Osman (PO) Oyster Group
- Carl Croft (CC) Croft Architecture
- Jonathan Andrew (JA) Baswich Business Services
- Andrew Bramall (AB) ISE Estates
- Sue Green (SG) Evergreen HR
- Tim Jobson (TJ) Jobson Solicitors
- Josie Morris (JM) Woolcool

- Darren Fortune (DF) Fortune Hart Chartered Accountants
- Nicholas Gallagher-Hughes (NG) D Cubed Design
- Trevor Humphreys (TH) University of Wolverhampton

- Jacqui Casey (JC) Stoke & Staffs Local Enterprise Partnership
- Patrick Farrington (PF) Stafford Borough Council
- James O’Kane (JOK) New Beacon Group
- Alun Rogers (AR) risual
- Mark Winnington (MW) Staffordshire County Council
- Helen Ashley (HA) University Hospital North Midlands (UHNM)
- Naomi Duggan (ND) University Hospital North Midlands (UHNM)

Chamber Staff in attendance:

- Sara Williams (SW)
- Lee Parker (LP)
- Declan Riddell (DR)

Apologies

- Martin Lennon
- Martyne Manning
- Tim West

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS AND GUEST SPEAKER

The Stafford Chamber President, Phil Osman (PO) welcomed delegates to the 29th Stafford Chamber AGM.



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PO welcomed Helen Ashley & Naomi Duggan of University Hospital North Midlands (UHNM), who delivered a presentation on current developments at County Hospital, Stafford. Due to Purdah restrictions, PO stressed that the guest speakers wouldn't be able to discuss future developments at County Hospital.

2. ANNUAL REPORT & MINUTES

PO delivered the Annual Report by digital presentation with printed reports available to attendees. The minutes of the 2018 AGM were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed by Tim Jobson and seconded by Carl Croft.

The President began the Annual Report by reporting another busy year for Stafford Chamber. Our Chamber plays an integral part of the Staffordshire Chambers Group, providing business support services to our members, helping to create and safeguard jobs, campaigning on issues important to local firms and promoting the Stafford Borough as a great place to live, work and grow a business.

"The President reported that Chambers membership in the Stafford area, has grown from 257 (November 2018), to 303 in November 2019. This represented a growth of almost 20% in the space of just twelve months. PO went on to report that five of the Chambers' Patrons are based in Stafford.

PO reported that the Chambers had continued to go from strength to strength, with the award of a contract to deliver the Stoke & Staffordshire Skills Hub for businesses across the county. The Skills Hub is operating from Stafford Chamber of Commerce, with a team of 5 staff, adding to the 5 Chambers staff who also operate from the office in Stafford.

During the last two years, Stafford Chamber Local Area Board held regular meetings with the MP for Stafford Jeremy Lefroy, to try and get a better understanding of the implications for business, of Brexit, as well as providing useful feedback on behalf of the business community, to Mr Lefroy. Department for International Trade (DIT), had delivered a series of Brexit preparation workshops for businesses across the area. A total of 21 Stafford based businesses had attended the workshops.

"We've had a range of brilliant events this year and it was a real privilege to meet so many new businesses and network with friends and colleagues across the Borough and wider



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Staffordshire area. Our events programme brings members together forging new business relationships and growing our business community.

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“It has also been brilliant to see the development of the Stafford Chamber Office, located within the County Buildings and co-located with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. We are now right at the heart of the business community in Stafford.

“With Brexit on the horizon there has never been a more crucial time to be involved with a business support organisation like the Stafford Chamber of Commerce and the services, events and lobbying that they undertake on behalf of the members.

“I hope you enjoy our Annual General Meeting and I look forward to working with you in the new year.”

“A key role of the Stafford Local Area Board is to develop policy and to represent the interests of members to government and influencers. This last year was a particularly busy year with a broad programme of meetings with local, regional and national influencers. The number of members who engaged in our policy activities increased again during the year, with a record participation in our surveys and forum meetings.

“The Chamber has worked with MPs, both local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership, to promote the Borough as a place to invest and grow a business. Members have had input into developing local planning policy, international trade services, education and skills provision, transport and broadband infrastructure, regulatory review and town centre developments. Many policy makers, influencers and public bodies consult with the Chamber as a critical friend to get a private sector view on their own policies and activities.

“Our local MPs Jeremy Lefroy, Member of Parliament for Stafford, and Sir Bill Cash, Member of Parliament for Stone, join Chamber members on a regular basis to debate the key issues affecting the area. Throughout the year the Chamber has been regularly meeting with Jeremy to discuss the implications of Brexit on businesses in the Borough.

“Your Local Area Board also meets regularly with members and officers of the Stafford Borough Council Cabinet. This year, we have made representations on behalf of members concerning:

- Planning, economic development and inward investment
- Access to HS2 services and procurement opportunities
- Transport services and infrastructure,
- How the council can help local SMEs access public procurement opportunities
- The Local Plan and regeneration and inward investment plans for the Borough’s town centres
- And relationships with neighbouring economic powerhouses and combined authorities

“As a Chamber Group we have taken the lead on national Transport policy for the British Chambers of Commerce. Bringing together an expert panel, we are working to produce a



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report calling for an integrated transport system and asking for decisions on national infrastructure investment that are not undermined by political short-termism.

“Our main transport priority has been for the Borough to be served by HS2. For over 6 years, the Chamber has lobbied local authorities, the LEP, local MPs, DfT and transport ministers. Our aim being to ensure that businesses in the Borough and the wider North Staffordshire area, would benefit from the infrastructure investment by gaining access to faster journey times, better connectivity and more frequent services. As a chamber we are excited to see how HS2 and the Stafford Gateway proposal help to showcase Stafford as a place to live and do business.

“The Chamber continues to meet with Highways England to question why the M6 J15-16 stretch is not included in their Smart Motorway programme. Currently there is no funding for this stretch of road – in effect, it is being leapfrogged - with smart motorways commencing again at Junction 16 to 19. This, we believe, will bring the M6 bottleneck up to North Staffordshire risking delays and disruption to the Stafford economy.

“As a member of the LEP’s local transport board, the Chamber continues to call for greater investment in local road, rail and public transport infrastructure. We are also represented on the LEP’s Employment and Skills Group, Staffordshire County Council’s Rural Economy Forum and Freight and Communities Forum. As you can see, the Chamber ensures that the voice and needs of businesses in the Stafford Borough is heard loud and clear.

“Our members are at the heart of everything we do, from business support to lobbying MPs and key influencers, every action we take considers the views of the membership. Stafford Chamber continues to thrive in turbulent conditions, demonstrating the strength and resilience of our members.

“Collectively, the Chamber group has over 1000 members across the Stafford Borough, Staffordshire Moorlands and wider Staffordshire area including the Finest, Futurefinest and Patrons members. This provides excellent opportunities for Stafford members to do business across Staffordshire.

Staffordshire Chambers is ambitious. Our 20:20:20 vision sets out our goal of

- Increasing our turnover by 20 per cent
- and helping to grow the GVA of members by 20 per cent
- and to achieve all this by 2020

“We believe that we can deliver this because we listen to businesses, care about the community and understand global opportunities. The Chambers’ reach collectively extends to more than 50,000 employees within our member businesses. This is an impressive performance enabling us to win the 2017 British Chambers of Commerce UK Excellence in Membership Awards. Being part of a countywide Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Greater Birmingham Chambers, continues to take us from strength to strength. The Chamber continues to deliver Growth Hub services across the county, providing business support and a signposting service on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership.”

“Throughout the year, the Chamber has delivered a regular programme of events in the District to bring members together - to stay in contact with customers and to forge new businesses relationships.

“As part of this, many Stafford members came to our popular ‘Let’s do Business’ event at Uttoxeter Racecourse in June and the Chamber’s Business Festival on October 24th, 2018.



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“The Stafford Chamber played an important role in the Staffordshire Chambers’ Business Awards programme, which was another tremendous success, showcasing the amazing things businesses are doing across the Borough and the county. Stafford Chamber members were successful in winning six of the awards

available.

“Members have also had access to the wide range of events and activities across the wider Staffordshire Chambers with our events team delivering over 200 events this year, attracting approximately 8,000 delegates.

“Stafford Chamber has delivered high quality, trusted training for many years. In 2017/18 50 training courses in the wider county. The topics covered were diverse, including IT, social media, leadership, finance and export documentation among many others. As part of the Staffordshire Chambers we have also delivered 17 bespoke training courses, with tailor-made training delivered to employees in their own workplaces on a range of subjects. The Chambers continues to work in partnership with South Staffordshire District Council, delivering a strategic programme of training to both district council employees and the local business community. This programme has now been provided to Lichfield City Council.”

“Our ERDF funded Mentoring for Growth project provided specialist mentoring support to companies with the motivation, ability and resources to grow. We exceeded our targets. Businesses within the Stafford Borough have been able to access up to 12 hours of fully funded mentoring. We have been successful in securing funding for an additional 3 years.

“Our Regional Jobs and Growth fund provided grant funding for capital expenditure to growing companies across Staffordshire. More than £6.8million of funding was awarded through the programme in Staffordshire, with 14 businesses in the Stafford Borough directly benefiting last year to over a total of £982,969. The total private investment in the Borough reached £7,599,612m. Collectively, we have also created and safeguarded over 262 jobs in the area.

“The Department for International Trade team supports Stafford businesses with a comprehensive package of international trade services to grow exporting activities.

“Our members have benefited from: -

- Exporting opportunities from the DIT website
- Access to key trade shows overseas
- Market reports
- Training via our Passport To Export programme
- And advice on IPR and digital technology for exporting

“The Staffordshire Chambers DIT Team remains the strongest performing team in the West Midlands. We were one of only two teams to hit all the targets set nationally by the government. The chambers’ export documentation service offers a 50 per cent discount to members and invaluable advice on how to ship goods. Last year, we processed invoices to over £200m, representing the huge value of exports leaving Staffordshire to over 100 countries, everywhere from Abu Dhabi to Zambia.”

“The chambers encourage local businesses to showcase all the good things they do, from looking after the environment to providing training for young people. This year we continued as the leading chamber of commerce for our work on Social Value, Social Enterprises and Corporate Social Responsibility. The Social Value forum, which is made up of members from the private, public and charity sectors, exists to make sure Staffordshire Chambers acts



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responsibly and encourages members to follow our example. The Chamber remains its membership of Social Enterprise UK and Social Value UK and the UN Global Compact.

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“The chambers set high standards and we are proud to obtain our accreditations for the new international environmental management (ISO14001) and quality (ISO9001). Our internal Quality Environmental Safety Team (QUEST) continues to monitor and report on areas of quality, environment and health and safety. All objectives and targets set for the year were achieved.

“The Chambers retains its position as one of the 53 accredited chambers forming the British Chambers of Commerce network. These accreditations are vitally important to us. They show our dedication and high standards of customer care and delivery, and they enable us to bid for various contracts to support the business community.”

3 ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

PO said that one third of Board Members are required to retire each year and the Notice of the Meeting shows that two members were seeking re-election. The Board Members seeking re-election were Andrew Brammall and Carl Croft.

PO said one further nomination from Martyne Manning, had been received to join the Board and asked for a proposer and seconder for all candidates nominated. All candidates were proposed by Jonathan Andrew and seconded by Martin Lennon

PO said that two members of the Stafford Board had decided to retire from the Board and were not seeking re-lection, these were;

- Anne Longbottom
- Mark Broadbent

PO passed on his thanks to these Board members who have given their time and efforts to the success of the Stafford Chamber.

END OF FORMAL BUSINESS