



**STAFFORDSHIRE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**  
**MINUTES OF THE 70th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 27 November 2019**

**Members In attendance:**

Graham Fletcher	(GF)	ARC IT Solutions
Ramona Hirschi	(RH)	Belvoir Stoke-on-Trent
Daniel Waterman	(DW)	Carse & Waterman
Carl Croft	(CC)	Croft Architecture Ltd
Margaret Michell	(MM)	Fendersocks
Karen Staley	(KS)	Geens
Natalie Hewitt	(NH)	Hewitt & Carr Architects Ltd
David Boughey	(DB)	KMF Group Ltd
Carl Copestake	(CCo)	Knights Professional Services Ltd
Mark Brammar	(MB)	Mark Brammar Associates
Suzanne Davy	(SD)	Moorland Contract Cleaning Ltd
Jackie Walker	(JW)	Moorland Contract Janitorial Ltd
Dean Moorhouse	(DM)	Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group
Phil Osman	(PO)	Oyster Group Ltd
Charlie Houston-Brown	(CHB)	Rushkeep Solutions Ltd
Barry Bouwmeester	(BB)	Smart Freight
Faye Williams	(FW)	Staffordshire Community Foundation
John Berrisford	(JB)	Staffordshire Fire & Rescue
Mike Herbert	(MH)	Staffordshire University
Kate Beardmore	(KB)	Synectics Solutions Ltd
Mo Trudel	(MT)	Trudel Associates Ltd
Kevin Paszek	(KP)	Tungate Forms & Labels Ltd
Hannah Ault	(HA)	Valentine Clays Ltd
Keith Mitchell	(KM)	Wardell Armstrong LLP
Mike Frewer	(MF)	West Midland Reserved Forces & Cadets Ass.
Philip Sinclair	(PS)	West Midland Reserved Forces & Cadets Ass.
Steve English	(SE)	Wood, Goldstraw & Yorath
Claire Nicholl	(CN)	Work Best
Adrian Allen	(AA)	Anderen Ltd
Paul Farmer, OBE	(PF)	Wade Ceramics Ltd
Laura James	(LJ)	Staffordshire Sentinel
Geoff Riley	(GR)	Business Innovation Centre Ltd
Brian Hoare	(BH)	Ceramic Product Design Ltd
Jem Hyde	(JH)	Ceramic Product Design Ltd
Susan Rose	(SR)	Susan Rose China
Jed Eatough	(JE)	LSGK Accountants Ltd
June Dennis	(JD)	Staffordshire University
David Woolrich	(DW)	David Woolrich
Peter Sherry	(PS)	Stoke-on-Trent College
Tim Jobson	(TJ)	Jobsons Solicitors
Julie Mirowski	(JM)	Rydale Roofing
Matt Hubbard	(MH)	Reels in Motion
Steve Timmis	(ST)	Sempar Accountancy & Tax
Jon Dudley	(JD)	Dains Accountants



**Chambers Staff in attendance:**

Sara Williams (SW)  
Vicki Hardie (VH)  
Lorraine Green (LG)

## **1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Staffordshire Chambers President, Paul Farmer (PF) welcomed delegates to the 70<sup>th</sup> Staffordshire Chambers AGM.

## **2 ANNUAL REPORT & MINUTES**

The minutes of the 69<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting had been circulated around the room and ahead of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting were approved as a true record of the meeting.

- Proposed by Margaret Michell (MM)
- Seconded by Adrian Allen (AA)

The President called for those against and any abstentions and the minutes were approved unanimously.

The minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on Thursday 20 June 2019 had been circulated. The minutes of the meeting were approved as a true record of the meeting.

- Proposed by Tim Jobson (TJ)
- Seconded by Julie Mirowski (JM)

The President called for those against and any abstentions and the minutes were approved unanimously.

PF delivered his Annual Report:

The Chamber remains in good financial health, achieved once again through prudent financial management and by taking business opportunities as and when they arose.

Staffordshire Chambers has continued to grow and make great strides this year, capitalising on the strength of being a county-wide business support organisation.

## **MEMBERSHIP & KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

As at the end of this financial year Membership was at 938, increasing to 1,028 as of today.



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Across the 3 Chambers our reach extends to over 50,000 employees within our membership network which represents 20% of the region's workforce.

Chamber Membership was down by 3.6% to 31 March 2019. In part this is due to the introduction of our new CRM system, Flightdeck which cleansed membership data and whilst this meant numbers reduced to 934, this now more accurately reflects the Staffordshire position and gives us a strong platform in which to grow.

The Chambers continues to deliver Growth Hub services across the county on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Area Partnership with diagnostics carried out in over 282 businesses across the county as a whole. In conjunction with this, our Business Helpline made 2,439 total referrals and signposts to 31 March 2019.

Finest is recognised as the voice for professional services in Staffordshire and is a powerful vehicle for bringing people together, holding 22 events in the last year with a wealth of influential speakers in attendance.

Futurefinest is our thriving professional network for Staffordshire's future leaders offering a comprehensive range of development opportunities both professionally and socially. After 10 years we are now witnessing former members taking on major roles and playing a full part in driving forward the area's economy.

We welcomed two new Patrons, Caja, and Ornuva which takes us to 23 Chambers Patrons for 2018-19

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT**

**Mentoring Growth Service** (previously Let's Do Mentoring) continues its success of previous years and from April 2018 to March 2019 this project worked with 120 mentors to deliver mentoring and support to over 400 businesses which helped them grow and prosper. Additionally, this ERDF funded programme enabled the creation of 80 jobs during this period.

**Business Crime**, run in conjunction with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, has offered support and advice for 4628 victims of business crime. We now have a dedicated Crime Advisor based at Stafford Police Station.

**Business Start-up Programme** has supported 348 individuals to kick-start 131 unique local businesses ranging from private chefs to business consultants and medical equipment manufacturers. This programme has been a huge success, so much so, that we are launching additional support through our new Start-up Chamber Membership in 2019/2020.

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce is committed to giving support to businesses in order to help the wider community here in Staffordshire. We are immensely proud of to be part of the following initiatives and schemes set up to help the more vulnerable members of society achieve their dream of setting up and running their own business.

**Boosting Women in Business** funded by NatWest has helped 20 women from a range of disadvantaged backgrounds to set up their own enterprises, build their self-esteem and inspire business ideas.



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**Domestic Abuse Advocacy Training** scheme has trained over 150 champions to recognise signs of domestic abuse in the workplace and to offer support, this scheme is run in conjunction with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Victim Support and Voices of Hope.

**Anti-Modern Slavery** has been set up to encourage companies of all sizes to implement an anti-modern slavery pledge to understand their ethical and lawful responsibilities relating to the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

The Department for International Trade is the Government department which helps UK companies to succeed in the global economy and more recently to help organisations meet the challenges of leaving the EU. Over 200 exporters were supported in helping local companies win over £160million in overseas sales.

The team was, again, the strongest performer in the West Midlands, setting the benchmark for other teams at a regional and national level.

We held several International Trade events including a trade mission to Japan in June 2018 and welcoming representatives from Russia, the USA and China.

The team processed export documentation worth over £250million representing goods from local companies being shipped to over 100 countries. This figure does not include exports to the EU as documentation is currently not required, however, this may change when the UK leaves the EU.

In July 2018 DIT was proud to sponsor the International Trade category at our Staffordshire Chambers Business Awards which was won by Stafford based company, Addmaster.

## **TRAINING**

From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce ran 53 courses, attracting 339 delegates.

Topics covered were diverse including, IT, social media, leadership, finance and export documentation. We also held several "Brexit Preparedness Workshops" throughout the summer helping local business prepare on a range of subjects.

## **EVENTS**

The events team delivers over 240 events across Staffordshire, attracting approximately 5,500 delegates per year.

During the year we ran speed networking events, new member breakfasts, business breakfasts.

In June we had Let's Do Business, the biggest business exhibition in Staffordshire, welcoming 125 exhibitors and 800 delegates to this one-day event at Uttoxeter Racecourse.



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We held our 3rd<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Awards in July 2018 which was another hugely successful evening, bringing together over 400 businesses at Staffordshire County Showground celebrating all that is great about Staffordshire businesses.

In November 2018 we launched our third Staffordshire Business Festival, this “festival in a day” was home to diverse and informative events held across multiples sites and which culminated in a Gala dinner opened by guest speaker, David Bryon, former MD of BMI Baby.

## **REPRESENTATION**

We have continued to lead on national planning and infrastructure policy for the British Chambers of Commerce.

Greater investment in local economic infrastructure has remained a priority for businesses in Staffordshire and we have called for:

- Access to HS2 procurement opportunities, improved connectivity and faster journey times.
- The inclusion of M6 junctions 15-16 in Highways England’s Smart Motorways Programme with local MPs writing and supporting our letters to ministers in the Department for Transport,
- Better east-west rail infrastructure and services
- Competitive access to superfast broadband
- A clear and business-friendly plan for Brexit preparedness

We met regularly with local MPs and local authorities to raise the key issues affecting our Members’ growth and success.

We continue to successfully hold regular sector forums, which has expanded this year to 17 forum meetings with 98 key influencers. Our forums include transport, planning, tax and finance, social value, energy and sustainability, manufacturing and HR & Skills.

Our Quarterly Economic Survey continues to give us a wider picture of businesses in the area. This report shows trends in sales and order, employment levels, pressure on prices and investment intentions. What it has shown, over the period, is that the uncertainty from the Referendum has caused businesses to lose confidence, which mirrored the national picture.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Our **Social Value Forum** is going from strength to strength encouraging both Staffordshire Chambers, and it’s partners and Members in being responsible employers and businesses.

From the Chambers’ staff we have raised over £1,500 for our Chamber Charities this year, holding our annual quiz night and both Christmas and Easter raffles.



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## **ACCREDITATIONS**

The Chambers set high standards and we are proud to retain our accreditations for the International Environmental Management (ISO14001) and Quality (ISO9001)

Our internal Quality Environment Safety Team (QEST) continues to monitor and report on areas of quality, environment and health and safety with all objectives and targets achieved.

In February 2019 we successfully re-obtained our Cyber essentials and IASME Certifications in recognition of the good controls we have in place to mitigate the risk of internet-based threats.

We are also extremely proud to continue to be accredited by The British Chambers of Commerce with successful re-accreditation due in the next couple of weeks (we hope!)

In August 2018 the Chamber became an accredited member of the Living Wage Foundation.

The Chamber has signed up to the "Pay in 30 Days Pledge", is disability friendly and is registered as a "Safe Place".

We have a new data overview policy, privacy policy and HR privacy policy to ensure we are compliant with GDPR. These were released to the staff along with extensive training before new data protection laws went live in May 2018.

Since opening our Members Lounge in September 2018 we have seen 470 individual uses which is around 25% of the Membership."

## **3 TREASURERS REPORT**

JD delivered his speech:

You may have seen the Chamber's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 which have been published on the Chamber website and you will have a copy in your AGM pack given to you on registration. There are also printed copies distributed around the room.

The Honorary Treasurer first pointed the meeting to the income and expenditure account which you will find on page 6.

We are reporting a loss on ordinary activities before taxation of £3,050 which was expected by the Board. This loss is partly due to the refurbishment of the members lounge and less rental income from the Chambers property in Campbell Road. Previous years have delivered surpluses which have helped the Chamber to protect and sustain future delivery of services.

Whilst we present whole company accounts here for statutory purposes, internally we continue to break down activities into six key areas: Membership, Marketing and Events, Training, Business Support, International Trade & Export documentation and Corporate Services.



If members do have any queries about the breakdown of income and expenditure, I will be happy to take questions at the end. Before that, I would like to briefly refer to the balance sheet on page 7. This shows that the Chamber is in a healthy financial state and has a level of reserves which will enable it to continue with the levels and standards of service which members are used to and to enable the Chamber to continue to invest in its infrastructure and future activities.

Fixed Assets (note 4) have increased due to the Chamber buying back the lease for the former Natwest building next door.

Trade debtors (Note 8) have decreased due to the new CRM system embedding in and tighter controls on debt chasing

During the year, the Board agreed to invest another £100,000 into Funding Circle (increasing from £100,000 to £200,000) and the cumulative interest received on the £200,000 invested is £7,369 (note 9)

Trade creditors (note 10) have decreased as there was less spend in the month of March when compared to the prior year and purchase invoices being received on time.

The Honorary Treasurer then thanked the Chambers' auditors, Geens for their in depth testing when undertaking the Chambers financial audit, particularly with the funding streams. He also gave a big thank you to the Chamber's finance team, especially Lorraine Green, for all of their input and the controls operated throughout the year and for the detailed reporting which she has provided to the Board on a regular basis.

Jon Dudley concluded his final report as Honorary Treasurer by, once again, highlighting the strong balance sheet of the Chambers and assuring Members that their Board is confident that this year and for the foreseeable future, the Chamber will remain in good financial health and continue to deliver a wide range of support and services to its members.

The meeting was asked, after a pause for any questions of which there were none, to approve the accounts:

- Proposed by Suzanne Davy (SD)
- Seconded by Margaret Michell (MM)

The Honorary Treasurer called for those against and any abstentions, and the accounts were approved unanimously.

PF advised that Jon Dudley (JD) will be retiring from the Chambers Board and from his role as Honorary Treasurer this year and thanked him for his hard work, dedication and support in both roles over the past 4 years and presented him with a gift.

## **5 RATIFY THE APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS**

The Chambers' policy is that every 5 years the external audit services are put out to tender in line with our procurement policy. After receiving 4 proposals from external companies the Audit & Governance Committee decided that this service should remain with Geens. It was agreed to do this as their prior experience and their understanding of European funding and how the Chambers operatives, would be crucial over the coming years in view of Brexit and a possible change in Government. They were also the most competitively priced.



The meeting was asked to approve the appointment of Geens as the Chambers' auditors:

- Proposed by Jed Eatough (JE)
- Seconded by Phil Osman

The President called for those against and any abstentions and Geens were approved unanimously.

## **6 ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS**

In accordance with the Articles of Association, one-third of the elected Chamber Council members must retire each year but shall be eligible for re-election. A total of 7 elected Council members resigned during the year or retired by rotation and of those, none wished to seek re-election. Special thanks to Mo Trudel and Tim Jobson for their continued support, time and efforts to the success of the Chambers.

Nominations for new Council Members have also been sought from the general Membership. The following nominations have been received:

Daniel Waterman, Carse & Waterman  
Nicholas Gallagher Hughes, D-Cubed Design Ltd  
Mark Brammar, Mark Brammar Associates  
Jackie Walker, Moorland Contract Janitorial  
Steve Timmis, Sempar Accountancy & Tax Ltd  
Phil Osman, Oyster Group Ltd  
Hannah Ault, Valentine Clays  
Dean Moorhouse, Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group  
Lisa Cooper, Internet Central

The meeting was asked to confirm the election of those candidates.

- Proposed by Carl Croft
- Seconded by Mo Trudel

The President called for those against and any abstentions, the appointments were approved unanimously.

## **7 ADVISING OF NEW PRESIDENT & DEPUTY**

Chambers welcomes a new President, Matt Hubbard (MH), who has served as Deputy President for the last 2 years.

PF will be taking on the role of both Deputy President and, after JD's retirement this year, the role of Honorary Treasurer.

These appointments will be ratified at the Council Meeting which follows this AGM.

**END OF FORMAL BUSINESS.**