



**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS CHAMBER**  
**MINUTES OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**11<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Members In attendance:**

- |                  |      |                                       |
|------------------|------|---------------------------------------|
| • Natalie Hewitt | (NH) | HCA                                   |
| • Suzanne Davy   | (SD) | Moorland Contract Group               |
| • Jackie Walker  | (JW) | Moorland Contract Janitorial          |
| • Rachel Buxton  | (RB) | Thompson Wright Chartered Accountants |
| • Jed Eatough    | (JE) | LSGK Accountants Ltd                  |
| • Richard Dodd   | (RD) | The Capture Factory                   |
| • Kate Taylor    | (KT) | Ornua Foods                           |
| • Mark Brammar   | (MB) | Mark Brammar Associates               |
| • Jon Eeles      | (JE) | Leek Town FC                          |
| • Wayne Johnson  | (WJ) | Klarius UK Ltd                        |
| • Adrian Hide    | (AH) | Adrian Hide Consultancy               |
| • Tom Wilkinson  | (TW) | BETA Commercial Finance               |
| • Neil Rodgers   | (NR) | SMDC                                  |
| • Tony Millar    | (TM) | Great Grounds                         |
| • Ruth Wooddisse | (RW) | SMDC                                  |

**Chamber Staff in attendance:**

- Sara Williams (SW)
- Karena Pawlak (KP)
- Sandra Nixon (SN)
- Laura Hodgkiss (LH)
- Jody Fox (JF)

**1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The President of the Staffordshire Moorlands Board, Natalie Hewitt, welcomed members to the fifth Annual General Meeting of the Staffordshire Moorlands Chamber of Commerce. She explained her role was to give a report of the Chamber's activities on behalf of the business community and what had been achieved during the past twelve months.



## **2 ANNUAL REPORT**

The President of the Board delivered the Annual Report by digital presentation.

The minutes of the previous years' AGM, held on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019, were approved unanimously as a true and accurate representation of the meeting, proposed by Natalie Hewitt and seconded by Suzanne Davy.

NH provided an overview of the Moorlands Chamber in the context of the wider Staffordshire Chambers Group and its role and remit within the Staffordshire Moorlands District. The Moorlands Chamber exists to;

- Promotes the area as a great place to live, work and grow a business.
- Exists to provide a wide range of practical business support services to our members
- Helps to create and safeguard jobs
- Campaigns on issues of importance to local businesses
- Promotes the area as a great place to live, work and grow a business

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2021**

The Moorlands chamber priorities for the coming year are;

- Make the Moorlands Chamber attractive to join through network opportunities to develop business connections locally.
- Provide events that are relevant to the needs of our members and their business needs.
- Listen to our members and so be the voice of the private sector – increasing our influence, profile and impact on issues that matter.
- Promote the Moorlands as a great place to do business and work with partners to improve all aspects of the social and economic environment.

NH discussed the Moorlands Chamber Membership, with a total of 93 members across the district and into Uttoxeter. Through the difficult year the Staffordshire Moorlands continues to retain members at a rate of 84% and the team are working to recruitment new members.



On the Chambers events programme for 2020 with key highlights from the calendar including;

• **Physical Events**

- Breakfast and Ornuva Tour – January
- Speed Networking – February
- Meet the Members Event – February

**Online Events**

- Winter Economic Plan – November
- During the first lockdown the Chamber put on over 120 webinars to support businesses from all over Staffordshire. Giving people free guidance on Finance, HR, Legal issues, Health and Well being, Digital support, working from home, and COVID compliance guidelines. We have also worked and held webinars with several Chambers from around the world to give advice on exporting and leaving the E.U.
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – Reignite Engagement

NH provided an overview of the Chambers business support programmes and their roll out into the Staffordshire Moorlands District including;

- Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub
- Let's Do Mentoring
- Chamber services
- Skills Hub
- Michelin Development Loan, and;
- Export services provided by the Department for International Trade



### **3 ELECTIONS**

#### **ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS**

NH stated that of the current board members up for re-election Richard Dodd would not be seeking re-election and would be resigning from the Board and that Jackie Walker had also decided to resign at this years AGM. Following the AGM notice being issued to the membership the chamber also received a further resignation from Suzanne Davy who had also decided not to stand for re-election this year. NH thanked all the resigning board members for their support and commitment to the Chamber and the board during their terms, and expressed how much they would be missed.

Adrian Hide, Tom Wilkinson and Wayne Johnson were elected.

#### **ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT**

NH stated that Suzanne Davy would also be standing down from the Deputy President role, following her term, and that Rachel Buxton was elected as the new Deputy president.

### **4 THANK YOUs**

NH passed on personal thanks to Sara Williams (SW), Chief Executive Officer and her team in supporting businesses in the Staffordshire Moorlands. SD also thanked;

- Members of the Local Area Board for their continued dedication to steering the organisation,
- the Staffordshire Chambers Board and Council members



## **5. GUEST SPEAKER**

**Neil W. Rodgers** *BA MPhil DMS MRTPI*

**Executive Director (Place) Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**

Growth investment Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands:

- Current Context
- Strengths and Challenges
- Current focus and priorities

### **CURRENT CONTEXT**

Local Plan – The SM Council along with the help of the community have managed to get the plan over the line!

Covid-19 – Significant structural changes because of the pandemic. Staff working from home. key focus was the Business Grant Regime. Successfully award £25 million of local grants to businesses and £1 million of Diverse Grants to 173 businesses.

Business Newsletter – Keen to work with the Chamber to push as much information out to local business and utilise this relationship.

Councils – Looking to work with local councils to implement and promote the relaxation of planning permission and re-opening carparks and toilets where possible.

### **STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES**

#### **STRENGTHS**

Working with some very successful businesses.

56,000 working age population with 81% economically active. Good available and skilled work force.

Vibrant Town Centres with great community spirit between market towns.

Local plan adopted – something positive to build on.



Leek and Biddulph – national occupancy below the national average which makes the towns stand out in the Moorlands. Cheadle is suffering and needs some focus.

## CHALLENGES

With rising unemployment at 4% the High Street is struggling.

The impact of Covid-19.

Skills Gap.

Low levels of investment/development.

Poor transport infrastructure between towns.

Low level Start-ups and slow growth off businesses.

## CURRENT FOCUS AND PRIORITIES

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*Cheadle* – Increase housing in the town, increase speed, look at investment, health and recreational facilities and increase footfall.

*Biddulph* – Supporting the Town Centre recovery.

*Leek* – The key focus is on Leek Market Hall. Carrying out a Visibility Study open to the public and residents to provide their views on the future of the Market Hall.

Leek and Stoke council talking to the Government in respect of the re-opening of the Leek/Stoke Railway line.

Working with Churnet Valley Railway They received a grant last year from DEFRA.

Assisting and supporting the visitor attraction.

Blythe Park – Working on the housing and Industrial Estate expansion.

Working on Green Infrastructure.

**END OF FORMAL BUSINESS**