



## **STAFFORDSHIRE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**

### **MINUTES OF THE 71st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 25 November 2020**

#### **Members In attendance**

Matt Hubbard	MH	Reels in Motion Ltd
Paul Farmer	PF	Wade Ceramics Ltd
Stuart Parker	SP	In-Comm
Jed Eatough	JE	LGSK Accountants
Kate Beardmore	KB	Synectics Solutions Ltd
Mark Brammar	MB	Mark Brammar Associates
Claire Nicoll	CN	Work Best
John Berrisford	JB	Staffordshire Fire & Rescue
Martin Lennon	ML	ELM Group Ltd
Hannah Ault	AH	Valentine Clays Ltd
Keith Mitchell	KM	Wardell Armstrong LLP
Karen Staley	KS	Geens
Helen Brocklebank	HB	RSM
David Woolrich	DW	
Geoff Barton	GB	Canalside Farm
Martin Williamson	MW	Business Doctors
Elaine Needham	EN	We Are Aspire
Tim Jobson	TJ	Jobson's Solicitors
Daniel Waterman	DWa	Carse & Waterman
Ian Kelsall	IK	Insight 6
Phil Osman	PO	Oyster Group Ltd
Carl Copestake	CC	Knights Professional Services
Phil Wood	PW	Barringtons Corporate Recovery Ltd
Neil Dingley	ND	Moore
Judith Smith	JS	Sustainability Smith
Margaret Michell	MM	Fendersocks
Stephen Silk	SS	Design Analytics
Mike Frewer	MF	West Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Assoc.
Vikki Sylvester	VS	Acacia Training Ltd
Heather Broadhurst	HB	Now U Know Training Ltd
Carl Croft	CCr	Croft Architecture
David Boughey	DB	KMF Group Ltd
Mark Brickhill	MB	Klarius UK Ltd
Tim West	TW	Wynns Ltd
Mark Savill	MS	My Simple Mortgage
Chris Knott	CK	Barringtons Corporate Recovery Ltd
Geoff Riley	GR	Business Innovation Centre
Tedane Edwards	TE	European Auto-Parts Exporters Ltd
Steve Timmis	ST	Sempar Accountancy & Tax



### Chambers staff in attendance

Sara Williams	SW
Vicki Hardie	VH
Lorraine Green	LG
Laura Hodgkiss	LH
Rob Lawley	RL
Jody Fox	JF
Aly Davidson	AD

#### 1. Welcome

LH advised the meeting that the AGM will be recorded for minuting purposes only, once the minutes have been sent out and are available on the website, the recording will be deleted. LH then tested the voting system and the hand-raising via Zoom to ensure everyone was able to participate. LH advised that voting will take place by poll which will appear on screen as the AGM progresses. Only one person from each member organisation can vote and any multiple votes from the same member company will result in that vote being classed as nul and void. The Chambers will keep a record of the poll results.

MH welcomed attendees to the AGM and was pleased to see so many attendees to the Chambers' first virtual AGM and advised that the AGM notice, Annual Accounts, Annual Review and minutes of the last meeting were sent out by e-mail and have been available on the website since Monday 03 November.

#### 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 70<sup>TH</sup> AGM

The minutes of the 70th Annual General Meeting had been circulated by email ahead of the meeting.

- Proposed by Keith Mitchell (KM)
- Seconded by Kate Beardmore (KB)

The President asked for attendees to vote using the Zoom poll asking for those in agreement, against or abstaining. The minutes were approved.

#### 3. PRESIDENTS' REPORT

MH delivered his speech:

As the financial year ended on 31 March 2020, due to Coronavirus we had all be in lockdown for a week, not knowing how the effects of the pandemic would affect the businesses or the people of Staffordshire. This meeting is to review the activities and achievements of the Chambers over the financial year to 31 March 2020 when we had only been in lockdown for 7 days, which seems like a long time ago now. We are all working closely to assess how the pandemic is affecting our financial situation but obviously this will be discussed much more at next year's AGM.

During the financial year, as you will see from the accounts, the Chambers continued to grow and make great strides, capitalising on the strength of being a county-wide business support organisation. Hopefully you will have had chance to read the Chamber's Annual Review for 2019-2020 which has been available on the website since early November. I commend it to you as a document that encapsulates everything that the Chamber is about.



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Paul Farmer will shortly go through the accounts with you, but the Board is pleased to report that the Chamber remains in good financial health, achieved once again through prudent financial management and by taking business opportunities as and when they arose.

We have continued to be the voice of business in Staffordshire and have provided a focus for getting businesses the support that they need and deserve.

## **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

As at the end of this financial year Membership was at 1024. Across the 3 Chambers our reach extends to over 50,000 employees within our membership network which represents 20% of the region's workforce. During this financial year, Membership has risen by 9%. NexGen & Start-up memberships were launched during the period. We welcomed a new Patron, LilaConnect, in April 2019 which takes us to 23 Chambers Patrons for 2019/2020.

**Positive Pathways**, funded by the Home Office, National Lottery Community Fund and the Centre for Entrepreneurs launched in October 2019 to support refugees in our area in starting their own business to help the wider community benefit from their expertise and knowledge. This is one of only four pilot projects nationally.

The Start-up Programme has supported 141 individuals through the last financial year realise their dream of starting their own business.

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 393 businesses across the county as a whole. During the year we had two specialist advisors join the Growth Hub, one in HR and the other in marketing which helped increase the overall diagnostic figure from last financial year.

Let's Do Mentoring continues its work supporting over 200 businesses with mentoring from 98 mentors. We are now looking to extend the project through to September 2023.

Staffordshire Chambers is always keen to increase engagement with our partners and we were proud to help both South Staffordshire District Council and Lichfield District Council design and implement a training plan covering a range of topics to be delivered by local trainers to over 240 employees. Planning has already started to look at their future training needs.

We continue to support businesses who have been the victim of crime alongside the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Our dedicated Business Crime Advisor, based at Staffordshire Police HQ offered support and advice to over 1800 victims of business crime during the financial year with over 900 of those accessing specialist advice from local businesses.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Our International Trade team has a strong reputation of supporting businesses who trade overseas. During the financial year the team helped Staffordshire businesses win over £250m in export sales, processed export documentation over £275m and delivered training on behalf of six Staffordshire local authorities around Brexit in the latter part of 2019 which shows the level of expertise and dedication of this team.

A Customs Declarations training service has been developed by the team and this is ready to offer to companies as we approach the end of the Transition period.

We held several International Trade events during the year, welcoming representatives from Chambers from Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the USA.



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## **EVENTS**

The events team delivers over 250 events across Staffordshire, attracting approximately 5,600 delegates per year.

During the year we ran speed networking events, new member breakfasts, business breakfasts and dozens of seminars and workshops to keep members up to date with topical issues.

In June 2019 we held Let's Do Business at Uttoxeter Racecourse, the biggest business exhibition in Staffordshire, welcoming 125 exhibitors and 800 delegates to this one-day event.

We held our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Awards in July 2019 at the Staffordshire County Showground which was another hugely successful evening, bringing together over 400 businesses celebrating all that is great about Staffordshire businesses.

In November we held our annual Business Festival at Keele's brand new Smart Innovation Hub. Over 500 delegates attended over the 2 days to learn about sustainability, wellbeing and ethical business practices.

## **REPRESENTATION**

We have continued to lead on national planning and infrastructure policy for the British Chambers of Commerce and have contributed to the work of the British Chambers of Commerce including the Quarterly Economic Survey.

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.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

In December 2019 we held a celebration event at Commerce House where we presented our 26 Chambers charities with the cheques for funds raised by Chambers staff throughout the year from quizzes and raffles.

## **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 June 2019 we were awarded Gold in the Healthworks Accreditation from Stoke-on-Trent City Council which was awarded following an assessment of the Chambers procedures, policies, attitude and activities in relation to the welfare and wellbeing of staff.



#### **4. TREASURERS REPORT**

PF delivered his speech:

You may have seen the Chamber's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 which have been published on the Chambers website and you will have a copy in your AGM pack.

I first point you to the income and expenditure account which you will find on page 5.

We are reporting a surplus on ordinary activities before taxation of £131,487 and after tax a surplus of £133,961 which was expected by the Board. This surplus is mainly due to the sale of 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 6. 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 3) have decreased due to the Chamber selling the premises in Campbell Road.

Trade Debtors (Note 8) have decreased due to the continuing tighter controls on debt chasing and less monies outstanding from funded projects.

We continue to invest £200,000 and the cumulative interest received is £12,651 (note 8).

Trade creditors (note 9) 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.

Deferred income (note 10) has decreased as the government grant on the property in Campbell Road has been brought into the profit and loss account.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our Auditors, Geens, for their in depth testing when undertaking the Chambers financial audit, particularly with the funding streams and the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on finances.

I would also like to say 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.

I would like to conclude my report as Honorary Treasurer by, once again, highlighting the strong balance sheet of the Chamber. Despite the coronavirus pandemic your 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 Steve Timmis (ST)
- Seconded by Martin Lennon (ML)

The President asked for attendees to vote using the Zoom poll asking for those in agreement, against or abstaining. The accounts were approved.

## **5. APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT & REMUNERATION OF THE AUDITORS**

Due to their prior experience, price and their understanding of European funding and how the Chambers operates the appointment of Geens as Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce auditors was proposed. They will hold the office until the next general meeting at which the accounts of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce are considered and that the Directors of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce be authorised to fix their remuneration.

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

- Proposed by Mark Savill
- Seconded by Geoff Riley

The President asked for attendees to vote using the Zoom poll, asking for those in agreement, against or abstaining. The appointment of Geens was approved.

## **6. TO CONFIRM THE ELECTION OF CHAMBER 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 seven elected Council members resigned during the year or retired by rotation and those who wished to seek re-election for a further three year term were:

Chris Knott, Barringtons Corporate Recovery Ltd  
Susan Rose, Susan Rose China  
Nick Philips, Beswicks Legal

The President thanked Nigel Eggleton, Steve English and Phil Osman as the members who will not be standing for re-election or who are retiring for their valued and continued support of the Chambers.

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

**Josie Morris, Woolcool**  
**Ian Kelsall, Insight 6**  
**John Tudor, Access Covers Ltd**  
**Helen Brocklebank, RSM**  
**Martin Williamson, Business Doctors**  
**Steve Tellwright, Capula Ltd**  
**Danny Poole, DWP & Sons Ltd**  
**Richard Faulkner, Skinbase**  
**Danai Gombera, B.I.G Healthcare**  
**Karen McKenzie, Douglas MacMillan Hospice**  
**Heather Broadhurst, Now U Know Training Ltd**



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**Victoria Sylvester, Acacia Training Ltd**  
**Lawrence Soleimani, Beaumonts Chartered Accountants**  
**Malcolm Henson, Henson Editorial Services**  
**Rob Fisher, Strategi Solutions Group Ltd**  
**Mark Brickhill, Klarius UK Ltd**  
**Muna Dilling, I Design Ltd**  
**Elaine Needham, We Are Aspire**

The meeting was asked to approve the election of the above Council Members.

- Proposed by Claire Nicoll
- Seconded by Stephen Silk

The President asked for attendees to vote using the Zoom poll, asking for those in agreement, against or abstaining. The appointments were approved.

#### **7. TO INFORM OF THE APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY PRESIDENT**

The President thanked PF for not only his guidance throughout the last year but also for his continued support for the Chambers. PF will remain in his role of Honorary Treasurer.

The role of Deputy President will now go to Kate Beardmore of Synectics Solutions Ltd

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

The President confirmed that the formal business for the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce 71st Annual General Meeting was done and thanked Members for their attendance.