



Stafford
Chamber of
Commerce.

STAFFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LOCAL AREA BOARD

MINUTES OF THE 32nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 7th November 2022

Local Area Board members present

Jonathan Andrew	JA	Baswich Business Services Ltd
Geoff Barton	GB	Canalside Farm
Ollie Ragg	OR	Topcashback
Judith Smith	JS	Sustainabilitysmith Ltd
Michelle Smith	MS	Stafford Borough Council

Chambers' members in attendance

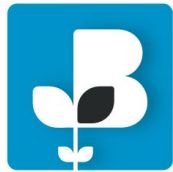
Rob Bailey	RB	RJS Solicitors
John Bill	JB	The Bill of Consulting
Andrew Bramall	AB	ISE Estates
Lorraine Conkey	LC	LR Partnerships
Trevor Humphreys	TH	Elm Group (Stafford)
Nigel Ryan	NR	EVC Solutions

Chambers' staff in attendance

Sara Williams	SW
Tom Nadin	TN
Declan Riddell	DR

Apologies

Martin Lennon	ML	Elm Group (Stafford)
Carl Croft	CC	Croft Architecture
Dan Ellis	DE	EPX
Karen Hays	KH	The Account Smith
Russell Jeans	RJ	Sefton Consulting
Jason Lancaster	JL	Newcastle & Stafford College Group
Simon Jobson	SJ	Jobson's Solicitors
Tim Jobson	TJ	Jobson's Solicitors



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1. Welcome

Both the existing President (Martin Lennon) and existing Deputy President (Carl Croft) were unable to join the meeting and had tendered apologies. It was therefore necessary to invoke 8.3.3 of Stafford Chamber of Commerce Local Area Board Articles of Association:

'The President or in his/her absence the Deputy President or in his/her absence the Honorary Treasurer or in his/her absence some other member of the Board nominated by the Board shall preside as chairman of the meeting, but if neither the President nor any such other person be present within fifteen minutes after the time appointed for holding the meeting and willing to act, the members of the Board present shall elect one of their number to be chairman and if there is only one member of the Board present and willing to act he/she shall be chairman.'

Jonathan Andrew was proposed to serve as Chair of this AGM by Judith Smith and this was seconded by Michelle Smith.

The formal meeting was opened by Jonathan Andrew, as Chair. The Chair welcomed attendees. The AGM Notice, Annual Review and Minutes of the last meeting were sent out by e-mail and have been available on the website since Monday 17 October.

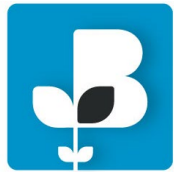
2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 31st AGM ON MONDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the 31st Annual General Meeting had been circulated by email ahead of the meeting and have been available on the website since Monday 17 October.

The acceptance of the minutes as a true record was proposed by Trevor Humphreys and seconded by Olly Ragg. The minutes were approved.

3. THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT – READ OUT BY THE CHAIR, JONATHAN ANDREW

Welcome to the 2022 Stafford Chamber of Commerce Local Area Board Annual General Meeting. As we have come out of COVID and some of the challenges of a new reality have come to light, it has undoubtedly been a challenging environment for all of us.



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I would like to start by thanking my fellow Board members for their support during the last twelve months. The Stafford Chamber Local Area Board has a diverse mix of skills and sector backgrounds and I feel this puts our Local Area Board in a very strong position as we head into 2023.

I would like to express appreciation to Trevor and Ybet who have stepped down from the Local Area Board. Trevor especially has been a member for a number of years and his leaving also marks the departure of The University of Wolverhampton from the town, in an upside it has meant that Trevor has joined us at ELM group! I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for the support provided by Carl Croft as Deputy President. Carl has been a real Chamber advocate for many years and has helped me to settle into my role as President.

We set out this year with some key areas for the board. Maintain our membership in difficult time, increase the interactions of the business community in Stafford, support the green agenda and ensure business is fully represented in the development and planning policies for the town

Stafford Chamber membership currently stands at 303. This is marginally up from 296 members at the time of the 2021 AGM but membership has started to climb following the pressures posed by the pandemic. Membership retention is a challenge, as businesses struggle to cope with inflationary pressures but once again, the Chamber continues to be the "go to place" for business advice and support in these difficult times.

The monthly Stafford Business Together social evenings have continued throughout 2022, with a growing number of delegates coming together for a drink and a catch up. It is disappointing that the Post House chose to not renew its membership of the Chamber but the event has started to move around to other Stafford venues including The Swan and Stafford RUFC. The popularity of this event has seen the launch of a Staffordshire Moorlands Business Together social evening.

In June 2022, Stafford Chamber launched a new recycling initiative, with the aim of tackling the fastest growing waste stream, e-waste. Businesses and individuals are invited to drop off unwanted mobile devices (laptops, tablets and phones) at a choice of Stafford venues (Stafford Chamber of Commerce, Topcashback & Stafford Market).



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The devices are collected by Chamber Patron (Stone Technologies), who will recycle the devices for future use or strip out component parts for re-use. In exchange for each device being handed in, Stone Technologies will make a financial contribution to charity. This has had a slow uptake, but we will look to grow this in 2023.

We have also proposed ideas for a green membership for the Chambers which I hope the chamber will pick up and take forward in 2023.

We continue to serve as the voice of our members through lobbying and representation. During the year, we have responded to Stafford Borough Council regarding the Station Gateway consultation and the Local Plan. It is still clear that business is not at the heart of these plans and the developments do not support sufficient employment opportunities but drive Stafford as a dormer town which is not really in line with sustainability. We have written to Staffordshire County Council to raise our concerns about traffic flow in and around Stafford, particularly when the M6 is closed. In September, we wrote to Avanti West Coast Partnership to express our concern about the reduction in frequency of rail services on the West Coast Mainline. In March, we took a group of Chamber members on a visit to the House of Commons, meeting with local MPs and Government ministers. At a local level, we continue to work closely with Stafford Borough Council & Staffordshire County Council and look forward to meeting Stafford Borough Council Cabinet on 1.12.22.

We look forward to growth and prosperity across the Borough, in the coming years. We will welcome improvements to Stafford Town Centre, supported by the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) and hope that these changes will encourage more businesses to settle in the town. We would particularly like to see more professional services based in the centre of Stafford. Our County Town enjoys exceptional connectivity by rail, with some of the largest conurbations within easy reach (London – 1hr 20 mins; Birmingham 30 mins; Liverpool and Manchester 1hr). The arrival of high-speed rail services will reduce the journey time from London and the development of the Station Gateway will put Stafford in a great position to bring high quality and well-paid jobs into the local area.

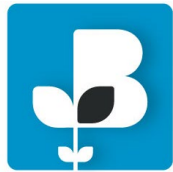


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Stafford Chamber has been moved around a lot in the last few years but are hopefully now in a more permanent home at Shire Hall Business Centre, in the heart of Stafford Town Centre. This centrally located building has been refurbished and will be home to around 20 businesses. Hot desking space will also be available for those wanting to work in an office environment on an ad-hoc basis.

In this challenging environment The Staffordshire Chambers' have continued to do an excellent job in providing support and helping encourage collaboration in local area businesses and I would like to express my thanks to all. I will not review in detail all of the great work they do but highlight the great support they offer:

- During early 2022, the Chamber continued to act as a Gateway organisation for businesses, to access the Government's Kickstart programme, offering support with funded work placements for young people aged 16-24.
- Expert business start-up advice to budding entrepreneurs across the Borough continues and since June 2020, 141 entrepreneurs from the Stafford area have benefited from support provided through the Business Start-up Programme.
- The Skills Hub team delivers support for the training and development of local businesses. This programme has funded training and development opportunities for businesses across Staffordshire and leaves the Chamber in a perfect position to pick up the role of delivering the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).



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- 52 businesses in the wider Stafford area and worked with under the mentoring programme, 'Let's Do Mentoring'. Support ranges from digital marketing and social media mentoring, through to support in the development of an IT strategy. Let's Do Mentoring has currently supported the creation of over 140 jobs.
- Positive Pathways programme has supported refugees from across Staffordshire, making links with Staffordshire Syrian Refugee Partnership. More recently, also offering support to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.
- The Export documentation team has been incredibly busy and remarkably, given our size, ranks as 3rd in the country. Although the Chamber is no longer delivering the Department for International Trade contract, it retains strong links with the locally based DIT Advisers.
- Work with Staffordshire Police in delivering the Business Crime Helpline continues and we have extended our contract to deliver Domestic Abuse Workplace Champions training.

The wider Chambers' events team continues to deliver a rich and diverse mix of events throughout 2022. After a year or two of virtual meetings, 2022 has seen significant growth in face-to-face events and an increase in delegates attending. Our Business Festival was headlined by Jill Scott of the England Women's Football Team. Other speakers were from L'Oréal, Amazon, Bank of England and British Chambers' of Commerce. Staffordshire's largest business to business expo (Let's Do Business), returned in October with more than 120 exhibitors and almost 1,000 delegates.



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We send our congratulations to our local MP, Theo Clarke, who gave birth in August. We very much hope we can have improved connection with Theo and Bill Cash during 2023, as it's essential that we get the chance to meet with our local MPs and share our thoughts about the key issues affecting the business community.

During 2023, our Local Area Board will continue to promote Stafford as a great place to do business. In addition to exceptional connectivity, ONS stats indicate that there is a well-qualified workforce in the Borough. Some 56.3% of local residents are qualified to NVQ4 level, against a national figure of 38.9%. We need to support our local plans to ensure we have the space allocated to develop high quality jobs in the borough.

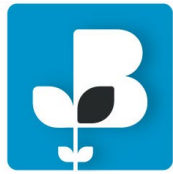
To that end we will also look to develop closer working relationships with Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council. We're all extremely passionate about driving Stafford Borough forward, ready to embrace some major developments taking place in the coming years. Our role is crucial to making sure that the business community has a voice, with business to be at the heart of any local development plans.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all of those joining the board and thank Geoff for standing as Deputy President. I believe we have the strongest board in my time involved and I look forward to continuing to focus on our priorities for 2023.

4. TO CONFIRM THE ELECTION OF CHAMBER LOCAL AREA BOARD MEMBERS

In accordance with the Articles of Association, one-third of the elected Local Area Board members must retire each year. A total of four Local Area Board members retired by rotation.

We are very sorry to lose Trevor Humphreys, Ybet Sanchez de Pattison and Carl Croft and would like to offer sincere thanks for their support as members of this Local Area Board.



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We're thrilled by the response from members interested in applying to join the Stafford LAAB. Nominations for new Local Area Board Members have also been sought from the general Membership. The following nominations have been received:

- **Lorraine Conkey of LR Partnerships**
- **Jason Lancaster of Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group**
- **Nigel Ryan of EVC Solutions**

Carl will be stepping down as Deputy President of Stafford Chamber and his replacement will be Geoff Barton of Canalside Farm and I'm sure will go on to become a great President, in a year from now.

The above appointments were proposed by Olly Ragg and seconded by Michelle Smith, ratified by a unanimous show of hands.

The Chair confirmed that the formal business for the Stafford Chamber Local Area Board 32nd Annual General Meeting was completed and thanked Members for their attendance.