



# STAFFORDSHIRE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE.

## MINUTES OF THE 74<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on Wednesday 29 November 2023

At The DoubleTree by Hilton, Festival Park, Stoke-on-Trent

### Members in attendance

Name	Company Name
Chris Knott	Leanard Curtis
Mike Frewer	WMRD
Matt Hubbard	Reels In Motion
Tomasz Putynkowski	JMT Accountancy
Malcolm Henderson	N/a
Charlie Houston-Brown	Rushkeep Solutions
Catherine Crockett	Lila Connect
Jeremy Lefroy	Forum Chair
John Berisford	Staffs Fire And Rescue
Geoff Barton	Canalside Side Farm
Caroline Mellor	Wardell Armstrong
Eve Davies	Protectapet
Rachel Boulton	Freedom Coaching Ltd
Jade Holloway	Staffordshire Chambers
Declan Riddell	Staffordshire Chambers
Chris Plant	Staffordshire Chambers
Sara Williams	Staffs Chamber
Grant Williams	Oakleafe
Nick Pietrek	Stafford Grammar School
Aga Gronkiewicz	Grn Financial Services
Thomas Wilkinson	Beta Commercial Finance
Victoria Harte	Axia Solutions
Matthew Parker	Diocese Of Lichfield
Margaret Michell	Margaret Michell
Mike Murray	Alphatech-int.co.uk
Katie Hughes	Support Staffordshire
Paul Deakin	Support Staffordshire
Alastair Machin	Chaffinch
Rob Fisher	Strategi
Claire Williams	Stoke On Trent College
Julie Mirowski	Rydale Roofing
Tom Pear	Reliance Medical
Angela Henry	M+M Group
Ian Kelsall	insight6
Steve Tellwright	Capula
Edgar Blazier	Sytech



Mark Swann	UK Business IT Ltd
Lorraine Green	Scs
Kate Beardmore	Synectics
Mike Herbert	Retired
Simon Brownhill	DWL Partners
Clare Wood	British Ceramics Biennial
Karen Staley	Geens
Mark Brammar	MBA
Steve Timmis	Sempar
Fiona Hawkins	Plinkfizz
Vickie Milligan	Cottage Delight Ltd
Lee White	Sterling
Iain Bould	Beeston Shenton
Neil Dingley	Moore
Geoff Riley	Foxfield
Kelly Shenton	AMB Insurance
Claire Gilbert	Crystal Klean
Becky Stubbs	Staffs Chamber
Ryan Dakin	Staffs Chamber

Kate Beardmore, President of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, welcomed everyone to the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce 74<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) and reported that the AGM notice, Annual Accounts, Annual Review and minutes of the last AGM were sent out by e-mail to Members and have been available on the Chambers' website since Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November.

According to Article 8.0 of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce's Articles of Association, the Company Secretary, Lorraine Green, reported that the 74<sup>th</sup> AGM was quorate. It was explained that only Members of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce may participate in voting. Each Member company shall have one vote. The voting rights of Members of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce are set out in the Articles of Association.

The Company Secretary reported on the proxy votes received. At the deadline of Tuesday 28 November at 12.00pm one proxy vote had been received and this will be added to the voting the AGM. For information, the vote was cast in favour of each recommendation on the agenda.

## **1. MINUTES OF THE 74<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The President asked for confirmation that the Minutes of the 73<sup>rd</sup> AGM, held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, are a true record of the meeting with a slight edit regarding the notes pertaining to Paul Framer who was the retiring Treasurer.

The Minutes of the 74<sup>th</sup> AGM were proposed as a true record by Margaret Michell, seconded by Julie Mirowski and agreed unanimously, with no abstentions, by meeting.



## 2. THE PRESIDENTS' REPORT

Kate Beardmore delivered the following statement:

"In a year of extremely challenging financial conditions, it is heartening to lead a Chamber which continues to increase its engagement and representation on behalf of our businesses and the wider community.

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce continues to do an excellent job in providing support and helping to encourage collaboration across local businesses. I would like to express my thanks to all.

Staffordshire Chambers' membership is currently over 1,000 businesses including our 28 Patrons. It is testament to the Chambers' team and the range of relevant benefits and services that, despite worsening economic conditions, membership is roughly where it was this time last year.

In January we launched our Daily Focus website and newsletter in association with Stoke based creative agency, i-creation. It has been an incredible success with over 11,000 individual subscribers and has become the go-to read for business news in Staffordshire seven days a week. Keeping businesses updated on the stories, issues, and campaigns and our 13 member forums offer a voice for everyone on just about every issue affecting business from money to planning and charity to digital.

We continue to work with Staffordshire Police in delivering the Business Crime Helpline and have extended our contract to deliver Domestic Abuse Workplace Champions training across Staffordshire.

Our Chamber Export documentation team continues to process import & export customs declarations. The team is processing more declarations than other Chambers across the West Midlands and ranks among the highest in the country.

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce has been appointed as the designated employer representative body for the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). Since the launch in October 2022 a high volume of activities and data gathering have taken place and Phase 1 has been approved by the Secretary of State in line with the approval criteria set out in the Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022. A route map has been developed to address a number of key priorities.

By far the proudest moment of 2023 was when Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce was awarded The King's Award for Promoting Opportunity earlier this year for helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds back into work, through programmes including Positive Pathways and Boosting Women in Business, was richly deserved. We were also a finalist again, for the BCC Chamber of the Year Award last month.



Of course, none of this happens by accident and it is down to the leadership and vision of our remarkable CEO, Sara Williams.

Sara announced her retirement in August and since her appointment in 2011 she has revolutionised the Chamber, creating an organisation that is fully inclusive, authoritative, compassionate, and effective at every level.

Sara has been a fountain of creativity and ideas over her 12 years in charge and like any true leader she nurtures people who share her vision and gives them the freedom and encouragement to develop ideas, to challenge and seek continual improvement.

What an honour it was for Sara and delight for us all, that she was awarded an OBE in the first King's New Years Honours list last December.

I am proud to have worked with Sara as President over the past two years and I hand over the reins to incoming President Steve Timmis at a time of change knowing that the Chamber's Board will soon be choosing a successor to Sara who will continue to build on her amazing legacy.

I would like to also thank my fellow Board members personally for their support and guidance, everyone who gives freely of their time and wisdom serving on our Council, the Board and member forums, you the members for being so engaged and the brilliant Chambers team who make all the magic happen".

### **3. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 1 APRIL 2021 to 31 MARCH 2022**

The Chambers' accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 were presented by Steve Timmis, Honorary Treasurer.

The attention of the meeting was brought to two new entries in the Directors Report; the environmental impact (page 2) and reference to note 15 in the financial statements. The Board feel it is important for the Chambers to recognise and report on its carbon footprint, environmental impact and what is being done to mitigate this.

The income and expenditure account on page 10, was brought to the attention of the meeting. The reporting of a deficit on ordinary activities before and after taxation of £24,616 was expected by the Board. Previous years have delivered surpluses which have helped the Chambers to protect and sustain future delivery of services.

A number of funded projects that the Chambers delivers have, or are due to, come to an end over the next six months. The surpluses gained over the last few years will help to support the Chamber as it transitions and develops services to continue to support its Members and businesses throughout Staffordshire.



The Chambers present whole company accounts here for statutory purposes, internally activities are broken down into six key areas: Membership, Marketing, Events, Business Support, International Trade & Export documentation and Corporate Services.

The Honorary Treasurer referred to the balance sheet on page 11. This shows that the Chambers 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 Chambers to continue to invest in its infrastructure and future activities.

Investments (note 5) have increased slightly to £558,611 and are broken down by £293,525 into London BarrelHouse and, £265,086 into Fidelius which is an investment wrapper.

Trade Debtors (Note 8) have decreased as at the prior year end there were a few large invoices being raised for at the end of the year, which have subsequently been paid.

Investments (note 9) have decreased by £35,855 over the year as monies repaid by businesses are being withdrawn from Funding Circle investment.

Creditors (note 10) have decreased due to the level of VAT payable and income received in advance in relation to the previous year.

Carbon emissions (note 15) this is a new note regarding the Chambers estimated carbon emissions based on carbon footprint tracking tools and Government valuations. The monetary valuation is not accounted for in any way in the financial statements.

Sincere thanks were given to the 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.

A big thank you was also expressed 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 provided to the Board on a regular basis.

Steve Timmis concluded his report as Honorary Treasurer by, once again, highlighting the strong balance sheet of the Chambers. Despite the continuing challenges, the Board is confident that this year and for the foreseeable future, the Chambers will remain in good financial health and continue to deliver a wide range of support and services to its Members.

This is Steve Timmis' last year as Honorary Treasurer as he will take up the position of President of the Chamber. He reiterated that whilst in the short term, the future is challenging, he is confident that the Chambers will emerge for a strong and vibrant future.

The opportunity for asking questions on the accounts was offered.

Lee White asked if the carbon footprint report was obligatory or voluntary.

Steve Timmis answered that it had been agreed by the Board that it would be included and take a lead on this point as the Board is keen to develop and remain accountable for the



Chambers impact on climate change as expressed by monitoring carbon usage and monetizing this in the accounts.

Karen Staley, from Geens, explained that the Chambers is a small company and only required to publish abbreviated accounts. However, this year the Chambers will publish the full accounts and report on carbon emissions and to put a note to the accounts.

Kate Beardmore said that the Chambers role is to continue to push the boundaries of normal expectations and it is hoped that other businesses will follow suit and the Chambers will be providing guidance and support to help them to do so.

The President then asked for the Accounts to be proposed for acceptance (Dr Eve Davies) and seconded (Lee white) after which they were approved unanimously, with no abstentions.

#### **4. CHANGE OF APPOINTMENTS**

Kate Beardmore, as President of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, informed the meeting that, at the Council meeting which follows the AGM, Steve Timmis of Sempar Accountancy & Tax will be ratified as the President of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce President and Kate Beardmore will be ratified as the Deputy President, in accordance to the Articles of the Chambers.

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

Due to their prior experience, price and their understanding of funding and how the Chambers operates, it is proposed that the AGM appoint Geens as Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce auditors and to hold the office until the next Annual General Meeting at which the accounts of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce are considered. It is also proposed that the Directors of Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce be authorised to fix their remuneration.

These proposals were carried unanimously with no abstentions after being proposed by Dr Eve Davies and seconded by Fiona Hawkins.

#### **6. THE RATIFICATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF STAFFORDSHIRE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

A total of seven elected Council members resigned during the year or retired by rotation.

Chris Knott of Leonard Curtis, Danai Gombera of B.I.G Healthcare, Ian Kelsall of Insight 6, Malcolm Henson of Henson Editorial Services, Rob Fisher of Strategi Solutions Group Ltd, Steve Tellwright of Capula Ltd sought re-election for a further three-year term.



Nominations for twenty-one vacancies were sought from the general membership and twenty-three nominations were received. This therefore necessitated an election which ran from Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October to Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. The results of the election of were scrutinised by members of the Board and of the Audit & Governance Committee, in accordance with Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce's Articles.

The candidates elected are:

Adrian Knapper	Adrian Knapper Estate Agent
Alastair Machin	Chaffinch Document
Andrew Healy MBE	Leek Building Society
Baljinder Kuller	The Supply Register
Caroline Mellor	Wardell Armstrong LLP
Chris Knott	Leonard Curtis
Claire Gilbert	Crystal Klean
Claire Williams	Stoke on Trent College
Danai Gombera	B.I.G Healthcare
Geoff Riley	Foxfield Railway Station
Iain Bould	Beeston Shenton Solicitors
Ian Kelsall	Insight 6
Kelly Shenton	AMB Insurance Services Ltd
Nick Pietrek	Stafford Grammar School
Rachel Boulton	Freedom Coaching Ltd
Rob Fisher	Strategi Solutions Groups Ltd
Robert Nixon	Tungate Forms & Labels Limited
Simon Brownhill	DWL Partners
Steve Tellwright	Capula Ltd
Tomasz Putynkowski	JMT Accountancy Ltd
Victoria Harte	Axia Solutions Ltd

The proposal to accept these elected Members was proposed by Clare Wood, seconded by Julie Mirowski and agreed unanimously with no abstentions.

### **CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING**

The President then concluded the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce 74<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance and for the belief in that all Members are part of a dynamic Chamber, one of the best in the country and one which is continually looking to improve its performance so that its Members have the best opportunity to prosper.

The President expressed her thanks to Steve Timmis for his engagement with the Chambers and Honorary Treasurer role and informed the meeting that Dr Eve Davies will be taking over this role.