



Stafford
Chamber of
Commerce.

STAFFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LOCAL AREA ADVISORY BOARD

**MINUTES OF THE 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT CIVIC CENTRE, STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL.**

Monday 6th November 2023

Local Area Board members present

Geoff Barton	GB	Canalside Farm
Lorraine Conkey	LCO	LR Partnership Events
Dan Ellis	DE	EPX
Simon Jobson	SJ	Jobson's Solicitors
Nigel Ryan	NR	EVC Solutions
Judith Smith	JS	Sustainabilitysmith Ltd
Michelle Smith	MS	Stafford Borough Council

Chamber members in attendance

John Bill	JB	The Bill of Consulting
India Hanspal	IH	Addmaster UK Ltd
Lisa Clemson	LCL	Stafford RUFC

Chambers' staff in attendance

Sara Williams	SW
Declan Riddell	DR

Observer and Chair

Kate Beardmore	KB
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Apologies

Ollie Ragg	OR	Topcashback
Sheryl Moore	SM	Stone Group



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1. WELCOME

KB opened the meeting and explained that Martin Lennon had ended his involvement with the governance of Staffordshire Chambers with immediate effect. As President of Staffordshire Chambers' of Commerce, KB explained that she would be the Chair of this AGM and 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 Friday 13th October 2023.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 32nd AGM ON MONDAY 7th NOVEMBER 2022

The minutes of the 32nd Annual General Meeting had been circulated by email ahead of the meeting and have been available on the website since Friday 13th October 2023.

The acceptance of the minutes as a true record was proposed by Geoff Barton and seconded by Judith Smith. The minutes were approved.

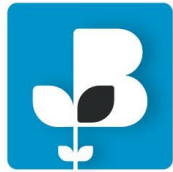
3. THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT – READ OUT BY PRESIDENT OF STAFFORDSHIRE CHAMBERS' OF COMMERCE AND THE CHAIR OF THIS MEETING, KATE BEARDMORE.

Welcome to the 2023 Stafford Chamber of Commerce Local Area Advisory Board Annual General Meeting.

2023 has been a year of change but Stafford Chamber 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.

Stafford Chamber membership currently stands at 298, slightly down on the equivalent 2022 figure. Membership retention continues to be a challenge, as businesses struggle to cope with pressures such as rising interest rates and staff retention. Despite the turbulent trading conditions, the Chamber continues to be the "go to place" for business advice and support.

The Chamber has continued to offer expert business start-up advice to budding entrepreneurs across the Borough. Since June 2020, 171 entrepreneurs from the Stafford area have benefited from the tailored intensive business start-up support provided through the Business Start-up Programme, which is now delivering sessions from our Stafford home in Shire Hall Business Centre.



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The Chamber has also continued to deliver the Positive Pathways programme, which has supported local refugees from across Staffordshire, making links with Staffordshire Syrian Refugee Partnership. More recently, the programme has also offered support to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. 105 individuals from the Stafford area have gained support through the programme.

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.

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.

The Chamber events team has continued to deliver a rich and diverse mix of events throughout 2023. The first Stafford Chamber President's Lunch took place in July, held at Stafford Rugby Club. The event brought the worlds of business and sport together and proceeds from the event have supported a local sporting charity.

The monthly Stafford Business Together social evenings have continued throughout 2023, with a growing number of delegates coming together for a drink and a catch up, on the last Thursday of the month. The event has moved around the Stafford Borough area, helping to support our hospitality venues. The popularity of this event has seen the launch of a Staffordshire Moorlands Business Together social evening.

We continue to serve as the voice of our members through our lobbying and representation role and the Stafford Local Area Advisory Board has developed a number of key business priorities. These include calls to improve town centre access and parking, encouraging businesses and public services to move into the centre. This will drive footfall and boost sales at our hard pressed retail businesses. The priorities also called for more support and incentives to attract businesses into the Borough and a call for improvement to manage traffic flow and ease congestion on local roads.



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During the year, we held 'Meet the MP' meetings with our two local MPs (Sir Bill Cash, MP and Theo Clarke, MP). The business priorities formed the basis of our discussions. The Local Area Advisory Board also met with the newly appointed Deputy CEO of Stafford Borough Council, Gregg Stott. It was Mr Stott who suggested the idea of a walk around the centre of Stafford, to highlight some potential "quick wins" to improve the visual appearance of the town. This took place at the start of October.

We look forward to growth and prosperity across the Borough, in the coming years. We welcome improvements to Stafford Town Centre, supported by the Future High Streets Fund and hope that these changes will encourage more businesses to settle in the town. It's great to see that the improvements to Market Square are now complete.

Our County Town enjoys exceptional connectivity by rail, with some of the largest conurbations within easy reach.

We would like to express our gratitude to our Stafford Chamber Local Area Advisory Board members for their support during the last twelve months, with particular appreciation to Jonathan, Jason, Karen and Russell, who have all stepped down this year.

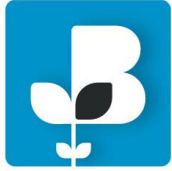
The Stafford Local Area Advisory Board has a diverse mix of skills and sector backgrounds and I feel this puts us in a very strong position as we head into 2024. We also wish to express our gratitude for the support provided by Geoff Barton as Deputy President and wish him all the best in his Presidency, which he takes on tonight.

We would like to record our appreciation of Martin Lennon, who has served as Stafford Chamber President for these past two years. Martin has tremendous passion and determination to drive business growth in Stafford and we thank him for his dedication and support and wish him well for the future.

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

In accordance with the Articles of Association, a total of four of the elected Local Area Advisory Board members must retire each year.

Jonathan Andrew and Karen Hays resigned during the course of this year. We are also sorry to lose Russell Jeans and Jason Lancaster and would like to offer sincere thanks for their support as members of this Local Area Advisory Board.



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

- **John Bill of The Bill of Consulting.**
- **Lisa Clemson of Stafford RUFC.**
- **India Hanspal of Addmaster UK Ltd.**
- **Sheryl Moore of Stone Group.**

Geoff Barton will move from Deputy President to succeed Martin Lennon as President of Stafford Chamber from November 2023 to November 2025. Nigel Ryan will become Deputy President of Stafford Chamber for an initial twelve month term, to November 2024.

The above appointments were proposed by Judith Smith and seconded by Dan Ellis, ratified by a unanimous show of hands.

The Chair confirmed that the formal business for the Stafford Chamber Local Area Board 33rd Annual General Meeting was complete and thanked members for their attendance.