



Minutes of the Staffordshire Moorlands

Chamber of Commerce AGM

Thursday, 9th November 2023

Buxton and Leek College at 09:00 hours

Present	Rachel Buxton	Thompson Wright Chartered Accountants	RB
	Natalie Hewitt	HCA	NH
	Jed Eatough	LSGK Accountants LTD	JE
	Tom Wilkinson	BETA Commercial Finance	TW
	Tony Millar	Great Grounds	TMi
	Tamsin Parker	Parker Piredda	TP
	Ajay Kapadia	Cut the Mustard (Holdings) LTD	AK
	Tom Malpass	Buxton & Leek College	TMa
	Adrian Hide	Hide Consultancy	AH
	Sarah Williams	Cottage Delight LTD	ShW
	Aga Gronkiewicz	GRN Financial Services LTD	AG
In Attendance	Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce	SW
	Karena Pawlak	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce	KP
	Sandra Nixon	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce	SN
	Steven Hopwood	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce	SH

Apologies	Peter Rogers	PJR Lean Associates LTD	PR
Distribution	All		

Moorlands Overview Speech and elections 2023

Minutes of the previous AGM

Welcome and Introduction by RB

"I would now ask the meeting to confirm the minutes of the 8th AGM which was held on 10th November 2022 at Leek College. The minutes for this meeting have been available on our website since Friday, 13th October 2023.

- **May I have a proposer please? TP**
- **And a seconder please? TW**
- **All those in favour? All**
- **Any against? No**
- **Any abstaining? No**

That means that the minutes of the 8th AGM have been approved.

On to the President's Report

Moorlands Overview Speech and elections 2023

Staffordshire Moorlands Chamber **membership** currently stands at 97. This is up by 11 members compared to this time last year. It's been another challenging year for retaining members when membership can be seen as discretionary spend. However, despite these challenges, we have continued to recruit new members. The typical reasons for joining include "needing to be out there to develop networking" and "raising profile" or "support for the business with HR, H&S". It clearly shows that our Chamber proposition continues to hold real appeal in the current climate. The Chamber continues to be the 'go-to' place for business advice and support in these difficult times and our levels of member engagement have increased during the year.

We have worked with 24 active businesses in Staffordshire Moorlands, under our mentoring programme, **Let's Do Mentoring**, this past year. Support ranged from 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 146 jobs across Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire.

The **Business Start-Up Program** has supported 74 individuals with advice leading to the creation of 31 businesses in the area. We have also continued to support the Dyer's Den start-up competition in the Moorlands.

We also continued to deliver our **Boosting Women in Business** Program to support more female entrepreneurs across Staffordshire to consider starting a business.

Through our **Positive Pathways programme**, we have also supported over 340 refugees across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire with developing employability or start-up skills to secure meaningful employment in region. We have worked particularly closely with the Leek Ukraine Group to support those refugees impacted by the conflict.

We continue to work closely with **Staffordshire police**. Our Business Crime advisers have provided crime advice to nearly 600 businesses across the Moorlands area.

The **Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub** also helped to support Moorland's businesses to develop and grow.

Since January 2023, the Chamber has supported **193** businesses in the Moorlands, received **147** helpline telephone calls, completed **28** Diagnostics, and made **42** referrals to partner organisations for assistance.

The **International Trade Centre** here a Staffordshire chambers have processed export documents to the value of **£180m** (expected to exceed £200m by the end of the year). The International trade team continues to be incredibly busy, processing import & export customs declarations as well as regular export documents. The team is processing more

declarations than other Chambers across the West Midlands and ranks as 2nd in the country. They have also just re-introduced the International Trade training courses.

Events - The wider Chambers' events team has continued to deliver a rich and diverse mix of events throughout 2023. Let's Do Business in October 2023 was a great success and footfall and also the Business Awards at the Double Tree. Speed networking saw 47 delegates, Summer Drinks saw 32 delegates and the regular quarterly Moorlands Business "Meet Up" at The Stafford Arms sees a regular 20 attendees. Great venue too. The next one is tonight with 21 delegates booked on.

December 12th, we are holding the Moorlands Christmas drinks at The Foxlowe. I hope to see you all there.

During 2023, we hope to continue to grow the numbers coming to each meeting and continuing to develop a stronger and prosperous business community in the Moorlands.

Policy - We met with the MP for Staffordshire Moorlands, Karen Bradley, MP, on 21.4.23. Discussions focused on the Leek – Stoke rail line reinstatement, Levelling up funding for Leek, local authority support for the business community, professional indemnity insurance increase, water and electricity (utility bills) – banding levels, tender contracts for small businesses, VAT on construction costs, rural business crime and broadband in rural area.

On 12.5.23 we met with MP for Stone, Sir Bill Cash, MP, whose constituency stretches out into Staffs Moorlands and includes Cheadle. Discussions covered the topics of transport, including road improvements and the Crewe–Stoke–Derby rail line. We also discussed planning and infrastructure, how to boost footfall in our towns and rural business crime.

During the year Sara met with Cllr Mike Gleadhill, Leader of Staffs Moorlands District Council and Andrew Stokes, their Chief Executive. Discussions included Lorraine Wright to manage the relationship with the LAAB and ensure there is engagement with the local forums. Sandra Nixon is speaking with Lorraine.

Declan Riddell, the Chamber Policy Advisor, recently wrote to the SMDC to ask for clarity about turning around planning application decisions. A Moorlands Chamber member asked us to pick this up. We've written to CEO of SMDC, Andrew Stokes, but not yet had a response.

We continue to serve as the voice of our members through our lobbying and representation role.

We look forward to growth and prosperity across the Moorlands, in the coming years.

On to Ratification and Appointment of Local Area Advisory Board Member Elections

Over to Sara

In accordance with the Articles of Association, one-third of the elected Local Area Board members must retire each year. There are not any Local Area Board members due to retire by rotation this year.

Two Local Area Board Members have served their first term on the Board and stand for re-election.

Wayne Johnson of Klarius has decided not to stand for re-election. I would like to thank Wayne for his hard work and past support of our Staffordshire Moorlands Chamber Board.

Adrian Hide of Adrian Hide Consultancy is standing for re-election for a second term.

- **May I have a proposer please? NH**
- **And a seconder please? TMI**
- **All those in favour? All**
- **Any against? No**
- **Any abstaining? No**

Your re-election is confirmed Adrian by the show of (unanimous) hands.

Nominations for the new Local Area Board Members have also been sought from the general Membership. The following nominations have been

received:

- Aga Gronkiewicz – GRN Financial Services
- Sarah Williams – Cottage Delight

- **May I have a proposer please? TMI**
- **And a seconder please? TW**
- **All those in favour? All**
- **Any against? No**
- **Any abstaining? No**

Your positions on the Board are ratified by the (unanimous) show of hands.

Rachel Buxton of Thompson Wright Accountants will be stepping down as President of Staffordshire Moorlands Chamber. I would like to thank Rachel for her hard work and commitment. Rachel's replacement will be Thomas Wilkinson, of Beta Financial Services. Tom has worked hard as Deputy President over this last 6 months and I'm sure will go on to become a great President, during his next two years in office.

- **May I have a proposer please? NH**
- **And a seconder please? AH**
- **All those in favour? All**
- **Any against? No**
- **Any abstaining? No**

I can confirm the formal business for Staffordshire Moorlands Local Area Board 8th Annual General Meeting is done and I thank you all for attending.