



Stafford
Chamber of
Commerce.

STAFFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LOCAL AREA ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE 34TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT STAFFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – SHIRE HALL BUSINESS CENTRE, STAFFORD.

Monday 4th November 2024

Local Area Board members present

Geoff Barton	GB	Canalside Farm and President of Stafford Chamber
John Bill	JB	Birch Row Ltd
Lisa Clemson	LCL	Stafford RUFC
Lorraine Conkey	LCO	LR Partnership Events
India Hanspal	IH	Addmaster UK Ltd
Simon Jobson	SJ	Jobson's Solicitors
Chris Lewis	CL	The Lewis Partnership
Sheryl Moore	SM	Stone Group
Olly Ragg	OR	Topcashback
Nigel Ryan	NR	EVC Solutions
Judith Smith	JS	Sustainabilitysmith Ltd

Chamber members in attendance

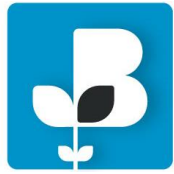
Adam Bullock	AB	Topcashback
Sanjaya Grero	SG	S Grero Coaching

Chambers' staff in attendance

Declan Riddell	DR
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Apologies

Dan Ellis	DE	EPX
Michelle Smith	MS	Stafford Borough Council



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1. WELCOME

GB welcomed all to the 34th Stafford Chamber Annual General Meeting (AGM). 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 11th October 2024.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 33RD AGM ON MONDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2023

The minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting had been circulated by email ahead of the meeting and have been available on the website since Friday 11th October 2024.

The acceptance of the minutes as a true record was proposed by Lorraine Conkey and seconded by Simon Jobson. The minutes were approved.

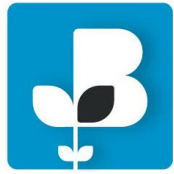
3. THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT – READ OUT BY PRESIDENT OF STAFFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, GEOFF BARTON.

'Welcome to the 2024 Stafford Chamber of Commerce Annual General Meeting. 2024 has been a year of change, with the election of a new government 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 287, down on the equivalent 2023 figure of 298. Membership retention continues to be a challenge, as businesses struggle to cope with pressures such as the actual rising cost of doing business. 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, 215 entrepreneurs from the Stafford area have benefited from the tailored intensive business start-up support provided through the Business Start-up Programme.

The Chamber has continued to deliver support for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub, including business support events held across the County. Many public sector funding streams such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) are due to come to an end in March 2025 and the Chamber will continue to actively lobby for clarity around the future of business support beyond this date.

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.



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Back in 2022, Staffordshire Chambers' of Commerce was appointed as the designated employer representative body for the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). During the last two years, the LSIP has played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the training demanded by employers and the training delivered through local training providers.

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.

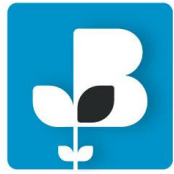
The Chamber events team has continued to deliver a rich and diverse mix of events throughout 2024, including Netwalking at Victoria Park and the ever-popular Stafford Business Together social evenings, on the last Thursday of the month. This event has moved around the Stafford Borough area, helping to support our hospitality venues.

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.

Following on from the UK General Election, we have connected members with our two newly elected Members of Parliament Leigh Ingham, (MP for Stafford) and Sir Gavin Williamson (MP for Stone, Great Wyrley & Penkridge). Ms Ingham has asked for these meetings to take place on a regular basis and quarterly meetings are planned for 2025.

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, as well as boosting town centre footfall. 2025 will see the opening of Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group (NSCG) Institute of Technology (IoT) and this will be a great asset for the town, offering cutting edge training and skills for a new generation of learners.

During the course of this year, we have taken our LAAB meetings 'on the road' and a big thanks to Topcashback and The Hex Group for hosting the meetings. I think it has helped to showcase some of the amazing business success stories from across the Borough and I look forward to visiting more businesses in 2025, starting with The Stone Group, who have kindly agreed to host the January LAAB meeting on Monday 13th January.



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I would like to express my gratitude to our Stafford Chamber Local Area Advisory Board members for their support and time during the last twelve months, with particular appreciation to Olly of Topcashback, who is stepping down from his role as a LAAB member.

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 2025. '

4. TO INFORM THE CONTINUATION OF THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT

The continuation for a further year for Nigel Ryan of EVC Solutions, as Deputy President, Stafford Chamber. Proposed by Judith Smith and seconded by India Hanspal.

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

In accordance with the Articles of Association, one third of the elected Local Area Advisory Board members must retire each year.

Olly Ragg has resigned during the course of this year.

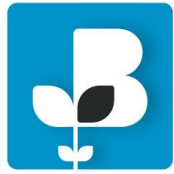
Judith Smith has confirmed an intention to stand for re-election, to serve a further three year term.

Adam Bullock of Topcashback has announced his intention to stand for election to join the Stafford Chamber Local Area Advisory Board.

Nominations for two vacancies including those standing for re-election on the Stafford Chamber Local Area Advisory Board have been sought from the membership and three members nominated themselves to join the Stafford Chamber Local Area Advisory Board. This necessitated an election by the membership which was held from Wednesday 2nd October 2024 to Wednesday 9th October 2024 and the following members received the most votes:

- Adam Bullock Topcashback
- Judith Smith Sustainabilitysmith

The above appointments were proposed by John Bill and seconded by Sheryl Moore, ratified by a unanimous show of hands.



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The President confirmed that the formal business for the Stafford Chamber Local Area Board 34th Annual General Meeting was complete and thanked members for their attendance.