

CHILTERN CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held on Wednesday, 18th May, 2016 at 12.30 p.m. at The Crown Hotel, Old Amersham.

Present: Vee Bharakda – Chairman (Wilkins Kennedy & Co.) Andrew Merrifield (Max-e-Biz Ltd)
Andy Garnett - Vice Chairman (The Garnett Foundation) Jing Chen (CJ Chartered Accountant)
Jean Pritchard – Secretary Tony Molesworth (The Chesham Society)
Sandra White (NPA Insurance Broking Group) David Gardner (CDC)
Paul Batey (Clarks of Amersham) Tim Frost (Brasier Freeth)
Robert Gibson (Dovedale Design) Simon Double (Solario Racing)
Anne Scott (Auberge du Chocolat) Francis Nathan (Jack Nathan Ltd.)
Cllr. Noel Brown (CDC/CTC) Ralph Hilsdon (Web-Clubs)
Cllr. Fred Wilson (CTC) Derek Beards (Handelsbanken)
Jackie Campbell (Patchwork Associates)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – received

2. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Vee welcomed everyone and, as an unusual precedent, handed over her Chairman’s Report to **Sandra White** to read out (as her last task before resigning as a committee member). This was Vee’s way of gently punishing Sandra for retiring from the committee, although she assures us she will still be around.

“It has been a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Chiltern Chamber of Commerce for almost 4 years and I would like to start with the most important thing first, and that is to thank my fantastic team of Committee members, who dedicate their time daily to the Chamber’s objectives and strategies. It has been challenging in parts but great fun too! THIS is the reason for our success.

So here goes, Our Chamber has 118 member companies and we serve a large and active business network by being their voice in civic matters by launching initiatives that promote business and enhance the quality of life in the Chilterns and mainly Chesham and Amersham’s business community.

We help to promote economic vitality by creating a vibrant community to support business growth and by assisting individual businesses and civic organisations to grow their enterprise activities. I have come to understand how tightly the business community interacts with one another and that Chamber membership is valuable to those who choose to engage with us. Chamber members have come together to discuss important local topics that affect their business, and allow our team to be their voice on their behalf.

Our objectives for the future are shown very clearly on our website, and Robert will shortly show you the great things we have done and achieved in the last year.

We want to continue our active leadership in supporting and promoting the growth of the Young Enterprise groups, the Bucks Skills Hub and the Economic Development in the Chilterns area and continue our support in skills and education.

I am excited about 2016/17 and look forward to working with our Chamber Committee in really engaging with the members to continue to help support thriving businesses, that in turn create jobs, which pay wages, that enable our towns and villages to attain an outstanding standard of living. Challenging and gratifying jobs gives people a purpose in life and help achieve individual potential. Meaningful work, with good pay, also contributes to the development of a caring community where people support charities and human services to assist those less fortunate. In other words, economic vitality and growth leads to individual opportunity, which promotes a strong community spirit.

I would like the Chamber to continue to make the Chilterns community “the best place to live, work and raise a family!”

At this point Robert Gibson was asked to present his CHAMBER YEAR in REVIEW, a pictorial overview of the Chamber’s activities during the past year, in which the following points were made:

Strategic Priorities

Small Business Support
Promoting a positive environment for local business development
Skills & Training Initiatives – tomorrow’s workforce
Growing Membership
Improving Communications
Visibility and Relevance

Robert illustrated his talk with photographs taken at our events throughout the year. His presentation covered the highly successful breakfast club and networking evenings, our involvement in Small Business Saturday, the Joint Local Plan, support to the High Streets, Special Recognition Awards, Chiltern Voice radio, Vision for Chesham, Bucks Skills Hub, OppsinBucks, Young Enterprise, and much more. He added that we also hold more light-hearted events such as our annual Golf Day and the Summer Garden Party.

Lastly, he said that our Website is an important tool and is constantly updated, our audience is climbing and **Andrew Merrifield** has improved our social media profiles and event registration process.

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It now remained for us to get some feedback from our members and friends, so a short Question & Answer session ensued asking our audience what they would like to see happen in the next 12 months. It was emphasized that we try to divide our activities between Amersham and Chesham as the voice of business rather than community, and have a good and cooperative relationship with neighbouring groups such as ourselves.

The Chamber was congratulated by **Cllr. Fred Wilson** on our achievements in filling a much-needed gap, and **David Gardner** reminded us that there are many small creative businesses in our area which we should not overlook, such as the artists who show their work during Bucks Open Studios month. And **Noel** pleads for a strong link between schools and the workplace, to which **Robert** replied that we are beginning to get the wheels turning on this. **Jackie** suggested we hold some of our meetings in schools and have some employer-led after-school clubs, and **Sandra** would like to get Young Enterprise teams to take part in our summer event, and as many businesses to be present as possible.

Robert was thanked for his interesting presentation and **Sandra** continued, on Vee's behalf, with the Chairman's Report

New Ambitions

I hope that the last 12 months have been great for you and your businesses and, despite trading being challenging and competitive at times, that you have managed to enjoy growth and celebrate success. We hope you will continue to support the Chiltern Chamber's objectives and initiatives and really participate in the work we are planning to do in the future, and celebrate our achievements with us.

*My plea to all our businesses is that you continue to connect with fellow Chamber members to raise the value of our voice in the business community. I will ask **Tony Molesworth**, The Chesham Society Chairman, to say a few words on this at the end of my report.*

I feel there is no room for complacency as the local growth has been largely reliant on consumer spending and asset transactions, which we can't afford to rely on. With interest rises ahead and whether the EU referendum is going to leave us in or out, we have to work harder to continue making changes, to strengthen our growth.

*If you have an interesting story to tell we'd love to hear from you and help you by including your news item on our website – just contact **Robert Gibson** with your logo, image and news story.*

I am hoping for 2016/17 to be very promising! We will continue with our twice-monthly breakfast meetings and our monthly evening events. There is always room to do more, and I am currently exploring ideas to start more industry-based forums in new and diverse areas. We'll be telling you more about these in the coming weeks. Watch this space. Finally, I am really looking forward to working together with you in helping me and the Chamber deliver growth to your organisation, and I now end by thanking you all for attending today..

Sandra was thanked for reading out this Report on **Vee's** behalf.

Next, **Tony Molesworth** spoke about the **Local Plan** and **The Chesham Society's 'Vision for Chesham'**:

"You will be aware of the Consultation on Chiltern & S. Bucks Local Plan for 2014 to 2036. This will probably be the most important issue to affect us locally for a long time both from a personal and business point of view (apart from the forthcoming In or Out of the EU referendum).

When the initial Local Plan consultation in February 2015 was superseded by the joint Chiltern & S. Bucks plan in late 2015 The Chesham Society decided to focus on two of its visions and produce a proposal to develop the centre of Chesham. We are working closely with the own Council on the joint plan and a local architect has created a 3D model which has been widely on display.

Chiltern will need to accommodate more than 7,500 new houses, and since Chesham is the third largest town in Bucks it will be expected to build over 1,000. This will impact on the surrounding green belt, overloaded infrastructure and employment base.

Because of this last point we started working closely with the Chiltern Chamber, **Andy Garnett** in particular, whom I personally thank here.

After a lot of public consultation we submitted our response to the initial consultation in early March together with a "Vision of Chesham". CDC will come back with preferred options for a second consultation starting in October, followed by publication of the draft plan in 2017. CDC received 6,000 consultation responses, having expected only about 1,500!

Nothing is definitely decided yet, but there will be many unhappy people due to the inevitable development of green belt land (still being assessed) and brownfield sites will be used for housing with new industrial sites on the edge of town, also mixed use in town centre. Two huge sites have been identified on the outskirts of the town for potential development. It is important to maintain Chesham's employment opportunities, and we need to know what sort of businesses we wish to attract. Infrastructure should be supplied before new housing is approved. It has been noted that all aspects of infrastructure were deemed deficient with the exception of telecommunications. We have requested a traffic survey since it is 43 years since the last one was carried out.

Finally, The Chesham Society will be developing a "Vision of Chesham" and preparing a full business plan in conjunction with the Chiltern Chamber and outside consultants, and will be seeking funding. It is up to the Chiltern Chamber to lead discussion on "new business opportunities".

Tony was thanked for this important and informative summary.

Fred stressed to us all that infrastructure is a main concern. With two potential large sites earmarked there will also be huge pressure on schools. The overall issue needs to be tackled as a whole and new building not allowed to just happen piecemeal.

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Returning to the business in hand:

3. RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 1: To receive and adopt the Minutes of the last AGM and Accounts for the year ended 30th September, 2015.

It was reported that the Chamber finances are in a healthy state, but as neither the Treasurer nor the Accountant were able to be present the accounts were circulated and any queries could be addressed to any of the committee.

The 2014 Minutes and Accounts were proposed as accurate by **Anne Scott** and seconded by **Robert Gibson**.

Resolution 2: To amend the date of our membership subscription year from 1st October to 1st January annually.

It was proposed to extend the subscription date to 1st January, which is a more appropriate time of year than 1st October. This gives members the gift of 3 free months for this year, which the Treasurer assures us the Chamber can afford.

Resolution proposed by **Sandra White** and seconded by **Tony Molesworth**.

Resolution 3: To confirm any changes to the Committee, and new members to be proposed and agreed.

The committee, at the time of the AGM notice going out 21 days before this meeting, was as follows:-

CHAIRMAN	Vee Bharakda
VICE-CHAIRMAN	Andy Garnett
HON. VICE-CHAIRMAN	Fred Wilson
HON. TREASURER	Steve Hayden
SECRETARY	Jean Pritchard
ACCOUNTANT	Mike Golding
COMMITTEE MEMBERS:	Sandra White
	Jackie Campbell
	Anne Scott
	Robert Gibson
	Andrew Merrifield
REPRESENTING CTC	{Cllr. Noel Brown
	{Cllr. Fred Wilson
REPRESENTING ATC	{Cllr. Liz Walsh
	{Cllr Clive Morgan

Sadly, **Sandra**, as mentioned, has tendered her resignation from the committee, and was presented with flowers and gifts as a thank you from her colleagues.

Cllr. Noel Brown will no longer represent us on behalf of Chesham Town Council as he has been elected Mayor – for which he was congratulated. However, he intends to be around for us! We hope to elect someone from Chiltern District Council onto the committee with a link to the County Council.

The committee was proposed *en bloc* by **Ralph Hilsdon** and seconded by **Francis Nathan**.

Resolution 4: To re-appoint Littlestone Golding as Independent Examiners for the Chiltern Chamber.

This was proposed by **Jean Pritchard** and seconded by **Vee Bharakda**.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

More flowers were presented, this time to the surprised Secretary, **Jean**.

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The meeting ended at 2.05 p.m. and was followed by informal chatting, and a cake to celebrate Noel Brown's election for his fourth time as Mayor of Chesham.