

CHEPSTOW CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Minutes of General Meeting

Thursday 1st September 2011, 6.30pm at The Beaufort Hotel

PRESENT:

Members:

Melanie Phillips – President
Sian Jones
Griff Rogers
David Burton
Andrew Griffith
Judy Griffith
Cllr Paul Rutter
Cllr Jacqui Sullivan
Richard Cobourne
Steve Sullivan
Gemma Monday
Alyson Hunt
Paul Evans
Michelle Dalley
David Eisenhofer
Alison Ferriman
Roger Hopson

Guests:

Dan Smith - M4 property Consultants
Peter Maynard – FWD Law
David Hodges – Beta Telecoms
Vivienne White – K N Office Supplies
Andrew Knapp – Best of Monmouth
Mark Elson – Chepstow Guide
Marc Bishop –Hypnotherapist
Angela Seymour – Runway
Lia Hind – Free Press
Janet Rawlings – Transistion Chepstow

1. **Apologies:** Ben Pugh, Dee Griffith, Peter & June Traynor, Brian Colley-Priest, Sullivan Marchant.
2. **Minutes** The minutes of meeting held on 2nd June 2011 had been circulated and approved by Paul Rutter & Griff Rogers
3. **Introduction to New Members and Guests.** Melanie welcomed members and guests to the meeting. She encouraged guests to join the Chamber saying that more members equalled more income, equalled more resources to assist and promote businesses.
4. **Matters Arising:** None
5. **Marketing Update:** Griff reported that the summer months had been a quiet time for the Marketing Group. Various entertainments had been taking place in Beaufort Square, but it was realised that organisation for these would need to start earlier in the year in future. Mark Elson, who is organising the Chepstow Guide, reported that businesses were not giving advertising as a priority this year and that he was struggling to fill the guide. The guide was a wonderful opportunity to promote a business and he encouraged members and colleagues to contact him if they were interested in advertising in the guide this year. If businesses don't promote themselves when times are hard they will not be in such a strong position when the economy improves
6. **High Speed Internet and Broadband** – Richard Cobourne explained that in order for his company to stay competitive with other businesses internationally it was vital that it had a high speed fibre optic internet connection (15-20 times faster than the average broadband) He reported that his company was currently in dispute with BT about the cost, tardiness and general difficulties it is having to obtain a decent internet connection. BT want to charge £10k install and £1,200 a month for this connection. He warned businesses to beware, "BT Local Business" is not run by BT it is outsourced to S&D communications in this area and the company uses high pressure techniques to obtain business. He warned those who were approached by this company to be very cautious and to read the small print carefully.
The issue has escalated to Director level at BT. He is having a meeting with David Davies MP on Friday 2nd September to discuss the matter along with Giles Phelps from Spectrum who are advising him.
He would like to hear from any business that requires higher speed than broadband and requested that they contact him richard@onscreenproductions.com.
Michelle Dalley commented that Farooq Dagstir (MCC) had advised her that BT had reported that high speed internet connections should be available in the area within 6-8 months. Richard explained that what is being promised by BT in some cases is not what is actually happening.
Dan Smith commented that smaller businesses might qualify for a grant from MCC. Jim Jenkins suggested that it would be a good idea if the Chamber arranged for a speaker to explain the types

broadband and internet connections to businesses. It was agreed to invite Giles Phelps of Spectrum to a meeting to give a presentation.

7. **WAG Single use carrier bag legislation.** Paul Rutter outlined the intricacies of the new WAG single use legislation coming in to force on 1st October 2011.
- From this date businesses will have to charge a minimum of 5p per bag.
 - This charge will affect all retailers in Wales, not just those who sell groceries
 - A single-use carrier bag is a bag that is not designed for substantial reuse and is often given out with the aim of transporting your goods home for just one trip. These are most often plastic bags but can also include paper bags too.
 - Businesses will need to keep records about how many bags they sell, including what they do with the proceeds from the charge (after they have deducted reasonable costs).
 - If a business trades above the VAT threshold and supply more than 1,000 bags in a year, it will need to publish these records either in their shop or by means of their internet home page.
 - WAG expects retailers to pass on the proceeds from the charge to good causes in Wales. Retailers can sign-up to the voluntary agreement which will be developed between business and the Welsh Assembly Government in the lead up to implementation of the charge.
 - MCC would be responsible for enforcing this legislation in Monmouthshire and would be inspecting business records but as yet no details were on their website.
 - Paul will provide a document outlining the details discussed and this will be available on the Chepstow towncrier website shortly.

It was felt that this legislation put a huge burden on businesses. It was agreed to investigate the possibility of all businesses contributing the 'net profit' to the same Trust/Charitable Organisation with a community environmental project. One suggestion was to contribute to solar panels on community buildings such as the Drill Hall. This would be investigated further.

8. **What do you want from your Chamber?** Melanie asked that members to let Nikki know if there were any relevant topics or campaigns that they would like the Chamber to cover over the next 6 months. The Executives would be meeting shortly to plan the activities and would welcome the input from members.

9. **AOB**

- Melanie congratulated Better Trains for Chepstow in their excellent campaign, They had worked hard to publicise Chepstow, promoting the availability of trains not only to local residents but in other towns to encourage visitors to visit Chepstow by Train.
- Angela Seymour informed the meeting that her shop – Runway and All About Eve had been told by MCC that their signage did not comply with the status of a listed building and had been asked to remove them. Those present considered that the signs were in keeping with the town. Gemma Monday commented that Propert's had had the same problem, despite having consulted the planning department before erecting the signs. The matter had been resolved amicably and she suggested that both Runway and All About Eve, contacted Jane Propert to discuss how she had dealt with the matter. Richard Cobourne expressed surprise that the Chamber had no say in the "look" of the town and thought that this might well be a good campaign for the Chamber, "Who chooses what Chepstow looks like" and that the Chamber queried what mandate MCC had to decide the "Look" of Chepstow. This would also be good marketing to encourage businesses to join the Chamber.

Meeting closed 20.15

Next Meeting Thursday 6th October 2011 6.00pm