



**Wells Chamber of Commerce
24th April 2023
Old Mill Board Room
AGM MINUTES**

Present: Louis Agabani, Sue Bartucca, Rod Major, Jonathan Orchard, Robert Powell, Martin Cook, Lewis Dyer, Dawn Payne, Andy Wallis, Mike Tucker

Apologies: Judith Ludovino, Ian Ames-White

1. Mike Tucker, Vice Chair opened the meeting in the absence of Sean Sloan who had resigned as Chair early in 2023.

The meeting opened with a guest, Martin Cook from Glastonbury FM Radio, who reported that the station wants to break down its Glastocentric nature to reach a wider audience. Joanne Schofield, the station manager is the only paid member of the station which is based in the Red Brick Building in Glastonbury, the rest of that staff are volunteers and it was started about 10 years ago and covers Glastonbury, Street and Wells. The National Lottery awarded the station a significant grant. Martin asked if the Chamber would like to be featured on the radio.

Martin also asked if the Chamber members would be willing to display posters advertising Glastonbury FM in their shop windows.

It was suggested that the new Chair conducts an interview with the station.

2. Chairman's Report and Annual Accounts

Chairman's Report

Mike Tucker was pleased to see that the Treasurer's report recorded positive rather than negative growth. However, the Chamber should be pledging money but also keeping a reserve fund - with the bare minimum to maintain in the account set at £1,200 per annum.

He also noted that the Chamber needs to do more to encourage new members to join - perhaps with a “buy one get one free” offer of two years for the price of one - or the Chamber itself could pay for the first year of membership for smaller companies - ideas need to be considered.

Robert Powell pointed out that the Chamber needs to do more to encourage these new members - we need a published list of meetings and speakers who would be of interest to the business community of Wells. Suggestions include Tessa Munt, James Heapey MP, Charlie Bigham and so forth

To encourage more companies and small businesses to join, Chamber members need to physically carry out a membership drive and visit estate agents, recruitment agencies, lawyers, solicitors and design companies in and around the city as well as the shops on the High Street for. Membership drive, with a membership application form in hand.

We need to offer these businesses some form of promotion - similar to the news stories in Wells Voice that came with membership of the Wells Loyalty League and we need to be more vocal about the benefits of joining the Chamber.

Annual Accounts

1. Jonathan Orchard reported that membership subscriptions from April 2022 to March 2023 are £1,200 with 24 paid up members. Membership subscriptions continue to decrease (with some companies not currently operating). It is noted that Bathroom Engineering, Merica Kitchens, Wells In Mosaic, Wells Funeral Services, West Hill Garden Centre and Tele PA ceased subscriptions (compared to the previous year). For transparency Old Mill has not paid subs for many years as it was felt that hosting the Chamber was sufficient.
2. Jonathan holds £117.62 petty cash. He suggested that it would be prudent to use this – perhaps for food/cheese?
3. We hold just under £6,000 of grant money which has not yet been allocated.
4. Wells Loyalty league funds of £352.27 were received in the Chamber bank account on 21st March 2023. This was followed by an email from Sarah Sloan which included a bank statement of the previous (now closed) account. These funds will form part of the Chamber cash balance, ring fenced as Loyalty League funds.
5. The Chamber only sponsored one Wells event in 22/23 being the Theatre Festival, albeit the amount of £350 was higher than previous years.

6. Expenditure was £1,474 - including website £776 hosting etc, sponsorships £350 Wells Theatre Festival - didn't sponsor anything else, little bit of advertising in Wells Voice, bit of reimbursements for cheese and wine etc.
7. Cash £8,439 (inc grant money) and we made a small profit of £186

3. Election of officers

Louis Agaban was unanimously voted in as the new Chair. Mike Tucker proposed, Sue Bartucca seconded.

Mike Tucker was unanimously voted in as the returning Vice Chair, Robert Powell proposed, Louis Agabani seconded.

Jonathan Orchard was unanimously voted in as returning Treasurer - Louis Agabani proposed, Mike Tucker seconded.

Sue Bartucca was unanimously voted in as the new Secretary. Louis Agabani proposed, Mike Tucker seconded.

4. Dates of next meeting

Monday 5th June

Tuesday 4th July

Monday 7th August – social – in a pub

Tuesday 5th September

Monday 2nd October

Tuesday 7th November

Monday 4th December

5. Member news/AOB

- Louis Agabani thanked Mike Tucker for stepping in since the Chair resigned. As his first bit of business as the new Chair, he nominated Robert Powell as president of the Chamber, Louis Agabani proposed, Mike Tucker seconded. Voted in unanimously.
- It was suggested that Chamber emails should be sent to all members on a more regular basis, not just the officers. We will send out the minutes and a copy of the accounts to members every month.
- Louis said that it was unfair to expect the appointed Chair and officers to do all the work of the Chamber - everyone needs to pull together - the whole community needs to help make it work. For example, he called on all members present to suggest speakers mto help attract new members. It was also suggested that cheese and wine are brought back to the meetings to encourage participation. Members could provide the wine and cheese.

- Louis reported that James Heapey will be available on 19th May for a meeting in Wells Town Hall at 6pm. This needs to be well advertised to ensure attendance is high.
- Hustings could also be organised by the Chamber in the Town Hall.
- Louise Agabani has a contact who is willing to produce a newsletter for the Chamber and he will be in touch with - perhaps discounts at various businesses could be arranged for Chamber members.
- Rod Major suggested that the Chamber should publicise the fact that there is nearly £6,000 available to support local business. Businesses and individuals could be asked to bid for the money.
- Andy Vallis suggested that the Chamber could organise careers fairs and so forth which could be covered in Wells Voice.
- Louis Agabani suggested that the Chamber invite more honorary members to join - charities and so forth, so we can develop the mailing list. He asked for Chamber members to suggest people to invite.
- Philip Welch might help write a newsletter once every quarter.
- Sue Bartucca to contact the website manager, Mark Osborne to find out how we can keep it up to date ourselves. We need to add all member's information and logos/pictures as a bare minimum.
- We also need access to all the Chamber's social media accounts in order to keep them updated. Louis Aganbani will ask for access information.
- Sue Bartucca suggested a joint networking meeting with Somerset Chamber of Commerce and the Wells Chamber of Commerce - she will investigate and get back to the Chamber with dates and so forth.
- It was also suggested that we invite the Bristol Chamber of Commerce to come and speak to us.
- Robert Powell then was asked to say a few words as the new Chamber President: "We need to start the buzz again to get people coming back - a team effort worked before - we never had a huge amount of members but it was very relevant for example, the Chamber played a large part in getting the poppy project off the ground. We also used to support all the Wells festivals with £100 and should do so again."
- Jonathan Orchard proposed that the Chamber donate £100 to Wells Theatre Festival - this was approved and JO will start the process rolling to get the funds to the festival.
- Sue Bartucca will contact the Comedy Festival and Literature Festival to ask if they would like to claim their £100 donation.