



**Meeting and AGM
Tuesday 7th May 2024
6pm, Old Mill Board Room**

Minutes

Present: Lewis Dyer, Louis Agabani, Rod Major, Andy Vallis, Sue Bartucca, Mike Tucker, Tom Wood, Mike McGrath

Guests: Helen Warner, Ross Young, George Robbins

1. **Apologies:** Jonathan Orchard, Howard J Burnett, Anna Hay and Pippa Westerman (Frontline Style)
2. Minutes of the last meeting approved.
3. In a change to the agenda, the guests were asked to speak first so they could leave before the main business of the evening.

Ross Young - Wells Independents started SOUP in 2016 - a quarterly charity event where four charities present their case, promoting themselves and seeking funding. SOUP has helped 89 charities and projects so far. The next SOUPs are on 6th July and 5th October. The event is sponsored by a business for £350, and people pay £5 on the door. The soup is provided for free by Fresh and Good and others free of charge, Burns the Bread supply the bread, alcohol comes from Bishops Eye and Morrisons, flowers from the market trader. Each charity has four minutes to present their case and they answer four questions from the floor, then all of the people attending (usually 80 to 90) vote on which charity brings the most benefit to Wells and they receive a £350 donation, the others go away with £118. The charity who wins the £350 is invited back to the next SOUP to report on how they have used the donation.

Bishop Michael has praised this wonderful example of community helping and supporting each other. SOUP is asking for sponsors. Regular sponsors include Probusiness, Bowleys Garage, Wells Funeral Services, Wells Business Centre

and Bishops Eye. The event also receives publicity for the businesses and charities in Wells Voice. (Photo presenting cheque from SOUP.) Bowleys Garage has stopped paying for advertising as the publicity the SOUP connection brings is working so well. Apply at wellsindependents.org/soup - the charity asking for a donation must Wells and the surrounding area.

SOUP is asking for businesses to get in touch and offer sponsorship. Four presenters each quarter. Potentially the Chamber could sponsor a SOUP event, but this will be discussed separately.

Business grants in Wells Voice regarding money from the Chamber.

Helen Warner is setting up a new veterinary practice Chew Valley Vets - she lost her job and is now setting up her own home visiting vet business, focussing on people and animals with mobility issues. She is launching the business in the first week of June. Helen will be visiting people in their own homes for vaccinations and routine injections, nail clips, checkups and so forth. She has bought a specialised cooling box (£360) for the vaccines as they need to be kept in a temperature range of between 2 and 8 degrees and the box keeps them cool for six days. The box has been her biggest expense, apart from computer software. She is aiming for her services to be sensibly priced as she doesn't believe in large mark ups on drugs.

Andy Vallis and Mike Tucker asked questions - asked if she is based in Wells. 40 people have registered and are based in Wells. She has been a vet for 26 years and is fully qualified. She named the business Chew Valley Vets as she grew up in the area. She realises that the home service is not a new idea and there are lots in the UK but not in this area. She will be covering a 10-mile radius of Wells.

George Robbins - used to own Daniels Sandwich Bar and has been and is still involved in community projects, for example she used to run a "pay it forward" scheme and delivered to key workers during Covid. She eventually gave up the shop as didn't enjoy the work and wanted to do something apart from voluntary work. She now runs Fudge Market on weekends. She started the business in November/December 2023 and she is getting very good feedback. However, the weather has been very challenging and her money has gone into replacing damaged gazebos and so on. She would like to have a shop in Wells eventually. The business has stalled because any money she puts aside has been used - she has gone through four gazebos and markets have been cancelled. She can't move further forward without investment - she has been invited to things but can't

afford to carry on. Her business is based at The Venue (her parents' business) and she makes the product during the day to save costs. She needs the money to buy more moulds so they can make more product to sell. She goes to both Wells and Street markets at the weekend. They have the space to make more product - currently they can make 100 bags in one go. Moulds are £10 each and they make five bags a mould but they need 20 more moulds to make 200 bags in one go. They also need to buy a stronger gazebo for around £500. She would add the Chamber of Commerce logo on the gazebo if we gave her the money.

Alex Holloway - Wells Theatre Festival (donation of £200 already given for this year) - Alex came along to thank the members who have supported the festival this year. This year the performers are largely from Somerset and they are running a pared-down festival. They like to put on performances for schools however, unless they are based in Wells, the schools can't come as they have to hire a coach which costs around £300. The festival would like to sub the coach costs/cost of tickets - £5 per child and free to teachers. The Festival was set up to bring high quality performing arts to people's doorstep. They are a community theatre made up of local residents some of whom have never been on stage before. Ros Johnson, a professional director, works with them. Over the five years they have built a strong, supportive community and would love to get to a wider audience - particularly children. They are looking for money and ideas to help from Wells' businesses. The Festival uses the bandstand, the Connect Centre, the Bishop's Barn, The White Hart and costs run on a shoestring. This year's festival is on 20th to 23rd June.

4. Treasurer's Report

Lewis Dyer was welcomed as the new Treasurer.

Balance £8917.24 in the account - after two recent payments including the one made to Wells Theatre Festival for £200.

We need to change names on business accounts which Lewis and Jonathan are sorting out.

5. Chair's report

Not much to report. Louis is sorting out an ad for Wells Voice to use the Loyalty League money to promote Wells business. We will also ask for a write up in the Wells Voice informing people that we have given local business grant money.

It was decided to give each business who has asked for money from the Chamber a grant of £250...In return, the Chamber would ask for a mention on social media, they

would be asked to join the Chamber - and to advertise the Chamber on their website and to participate in a cheque presentation with a picture in Wells Voice.

Louis asked Tom Woods if St Andrews press could put together an offer so these small businesses could benefit from a discounted package for stationary.

Lewis asked how we top up our bank account so we don't run out of the grant money. It was suggested that we look for other grants available and talk to Somerset Chamber of Commerce for advice. Tom suggested that we have a limited six-month window to give out grants.

Tom also suggested that we could sponsor other local groups such as the boys football team that he runs. The Committee will consider his suggestion.

The Committee voted to sponsor a SOUP event for £350 as a one-off donation - possibly for the July meeting.

6. Membership

Tom Wood was voted in as Membership Officer because he was absent for the recent AGM where all other officers were confirmed. - proposed and seconded by Louis and Mike. Lewis and Tom will need to access Membership Mojo and learn how to use it. We have some membership inquiries in the gmail account that need following up on so they also need access to the emails.

7. Correspondence

We have received an email from Martin Cooke at GWS Radio asking for members of the Chamber to be interviewed which we need to think about. They would be pre recorded interviews from Chamber members. The station is keen for us to be involved as Wells Business Forum is involved with him. Mike Tucker will talk to him. Tom and Mike will be in touch with him. Sue to write a press release about the Chamber and what it does. Jonathan Orchard would also be a good choice to talk to him.

8. We will be advertising in Wells Voice over 12 months at a 50% discount of £324 and will change the copy nearer to Christmas. Andy, Louis and Tom will collaborate on the design.

9. Dates of next meetings

Wednesday 5th June - Breakfast Networking at 9am - venue to be confirmed.
We could have a talk from the Small Business Finance Team from Old Mill. Or a local neighbourhood police officer.

It was suggested that we run a husting hosted by the Chamber - and that we invite all the political candidates invited to speak on business matters. Possibly have this in Cedars Hall.

Monday 1st July 6pm at Wells Golf Club. Driving Range competition from 5pm.
Meeting and social with a 30-minute meeting.