



**Meeting and AGM  
Monday 8th April 2024  
6pm, Old Mill Board Room**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Lewis Dyer, Louis Agabani, Rod Major, Andy Vallis, Sue Bartucca, Nicola McLean, Robert Powell, Jonathan Orchard, Mike Tucker, Ian Ames-White, Chris Morrison.

1. **Apologies:** None received
2. Minutes of the last meeting and the 2023 AGM were approved.
3. Treasurer's report  
A detailed annual report was received from Jonathan - cash stands at £8411.24 at end of March 2024 - pretty much on a level par from last year. We should be using the grant money for small businesses. Loyalty League scheme - we need to decide what to do with the money.
4. Chair's report  
We have stabilised the Chamber over the past year. Our first proper networking meeting in Blossoms of Wells was very successful and we need to do more in the same format. The Chamber has done a lot of work helping retailers in the city. (Louis has some money to give to the Chamber for the shoplifting sticker initiative). We have received more and more requests for the Chamber to do things for the city - from the police and members of the public - there is a definite perception that we can help people.
5. Election of officers

**Chair** - Louis Agabani

**Vice Chair** - Mike Tucker

**Secretary** - Sue Bartucca

**Membership Secretary** - Tom Woods - voted in in his absence - this will be confirmed at the next meeting Tom attends

**President** - Robbert Powell

**Treasurer** - Lewis Dyer - it was suggested that Lewis Dyer has a three-month handover as Treasurer - easy as they work together - Jonathan can train him up.

All nominations were met with the correct proposals and seconding from the Committee - the choice of officers was unanimous.

6. Wells Theatre Festival have asked for a donation and the Committee agreed to let them have £200 to match last year's donation from the Chamber. Andy Vallis was asked to run a small piece in Wells Voice about the grants we can donate to local festivals and so forth and to link it to the small business funds that are available - we need to appeal to small local businesses to ask for money - for training, money for a startup and so forth. Grants of up to £200 or match fund. Call people in to present their requests at meetings.
7. Wells Loyalty League - it was suggested that the money in the pot be used at Christmas to run ads to encourage people to shop in Wells. The Loyalty League is not functioning at the moment. In the past Steve Luck the Town Clerk ran it. Wells Business Forum are also running a loyalty programme.
8. Correspondence  
Westlink Travel - Chew Valley to Wells bus service information received  
Wells Cathedral - from 22nd April onwards they are charging non-residents for entry - Wells residents need to apply for an annual pass otherwise it is £14 for an annual fee. Joint ticket with The Bishop's Palace. Bath Abbey has been charging for a year and their visitor numbers have not dropped.
9. AOB

Ian Ames White - Wells In Mosaic is on schedule to finish being built this year and negotiations are going on to mount it on Cathedral Green. There is a final push for sponsorship - they need to pay for archaeologists and specialist installers from Italy - plus a marquee for the installation. Need to raise £35,000. Installation will be in 2025.

The Britannia Inn closed two and a half years ago. There is no social community venue at the Horrington end of the city - apart from the petrol station. Therefore a steering group of experienced people has been set up to purchase the Inn for the community. Registered their interest and have 6 months to get a plan together. Community Benefits Society - begin a share offer to put out to the community to raise the funds. Plunket UK has sponsored pubs to be taken over by the community. The pub is on the market for £350,000 - the group is hoping to get it down nearer to £260,000. And estimates suggest they will also need £150,000 to renovate the building. There is a restricted covenant on the land to give back 60% of the value to the owners.

There was a very positive and high response from the community - of the reposes 90% were in favour of the Pub Hub idea - Police blue light area, health pop up service, cafe, warm space, parties etc, mums and babies groups and so on. Social media consultation is very positive. Linking with St Thomas Church (has a £1.1m legacy to spend). They will approach the Community Ownership Fund government initiative which match funds raised.

Rod Major said that he had carried out a feasibility study to move his business to Wells from Chilcompton but it would cost four times as much. He will be staying where he is for five more years.

Chris from Rotary - two main events are the Boules tournament on 30th June in The Bishop's Palace. A new event - 29th September in the recreation ground - a sedan chair race. Teams will build a sedan chair and race around a course within the rec. Five in a team. Obstacles to negotiate. Music on the bandstand, trade stands, races for children. All proceeds to the air ambulance.

Andy Vallis - Well Voice was shortlisted for the hyperlocal newspaper of the year at the Newspaper Awards and was commended. In the final 6 out of 400.

Wells Golf Club's membership is full with a waiting list - Nicola will remain standing in for Mike on the Committee. String Junior Section and a new pro, Nicola will be leaving the club, but will continue to come along to the Chamber and has offered to help with the Wells Loyalty League if needed.

Jonathan reported that Old Mill has won an Entrepreneur conference award for businesses that work with entrepreneurs and were up against some much larger firms. Financial planners and accountants - their overall offering is unusual. So many businesses miss out on sensible and simple tax advice.

Mike Tucker said what a great bunch we are and that more social events were needed. Start the new year encouraging new people in. There are 220 in the Wells security group and it would be good to encourage them to get involved with the Chamber.

Sue Bartucca - the Wells Cathedral School Enterprises department is opening out the School's sports facilities to the community. Sue to give relevant flyers to Mike Tucker.

Louis Agabani - Wells City Council trying to take over the market to make it more accountable. Not enough weights for the gazebos for example - the market is getting smaller as result, also affecting other markets in Shepton and Glastonbury. If you don't turn up three times you are kicked off the market. A contractor puts it up and dismantles it - this costs £40,000 a year and it is felt that they are not doing their jobs properly.

The number of crimes reported in Frome was over 600 in the last three months - in Wells it was 44 and Shepton Mallet was 22. This is no reflection of the true amount of crimes now the police station has gone. The police have offered to come and see the Chamber every three

months to update us and are willing to meet with businesses and retailers. Simon Lancey - invite to networking meeting. Encourage businesses to report the crimes no matter how petty they are so crime figures are accurate.

**Dates of next meetings:**

7th May - normal meeting - book networking morning for 5th June and invite the police.

Monday in July go to the golf club - have someone from Old Mill's small business team giving some quick, practical tips for business.