Wells Chamber of Commerce Meeting and AGM Minutes
Monday 11th May, Old Mill Board Room

Present

Lewis Dyer, Jonathan Orchard, Judith Ludovino, Gerald Creed, Mike Tucker, Tom Wood, Matt Ruddle, Paddy O'Hagan, Beverley Smith

Update on Current and Past Events

Members reflected on the recent visit to Wells Museum to learn about the history of the Romans. The event was well received and members expressed interest in organising similar events in future, although time and other work/life commitments means there are limited opportunities to arrange these.

Update on New Members

The Chamber welcomed Gerald Creed as a new member and welcomed back previous member Judith Ludovino.

Meeting Dates

Meeting dates are now available on the website. Upcoming meetings are:

- 8 June
- 6 July
- August – Summer break
- 7 September
- 5 October
- 2 November

- 7 December

Election of Officers

- Tom Wood agreed to take on the role of Interim Vice Chair and will remain Membership Secretary
- Mike Tucker will continue as Chair.
- Lewis Dyer will remain Treasurer.
- Bev Smith agreed to continue as Secretary on an interim basis.

It was agreed that, in light of ongoing discussions regarding a potential chamber merger, maintaining continuity within the committee was the best way forward at this stage. The current structure will therefore remain in place pending further discussions and any future decisions regarding merger.

Some committee members indicated that they would be open to reviewing their positions should future structural changes once direction was established.

The chairman noted he is very grateful for the existing committee and the events that we have done over the past year considering the few member numbers that attended our meetings

Potential Merger of Chambers

Discussions were held regarding the potential merger of Wells Chamber of Commerce with a larger Mendip Chamber, as proposed by Jill from the Street & Glastonbury Chamber.

Mike advised that he had briefly discussed the proposal with the President, Robert Powell, and that there was a preference for Wells to remain independent. However, there was recognition that attracting new members with the time and energy to support the Chamber has become increasingly difficult, particularly since COVID-19, and that there may be benefits to working together as part of a larger organisation – We could be stronger together.

It was noted that Sedgemoor Chamber has had success through merging chambers and would be willing to provide guidance on the process.

Members agreed that the proposal has potential and is worth exploring further with Jill, with the Chamber remaining part of the conversation so all options can be explored.

Judith noted that there had previously been an association of chambers, with places such as Frome thriving while still working together through a wider association.

Paddy observed that attendance at meetings and volunteering in general has declined in recent years. He noted that organisations such as the Lions have experienced reduced participation, with the Moat Race nearly being cancelled due to only three lions remaining.

Paddy also highlighted that there are opportunities available, but that it is important to be creative. He referred to Carnival and noted that Nigel Clarke has applied to UNESCO for recognition relating to intangible cultural heritage status (to be confirmed). He also referenced the Town of Culture initiative, which Wells Town Council decided not to take forward, although eight Somerset towns are being put forward.

Discussion also covered tourism and the co-ordination of attractions through Visit Wells CIO. Paddy explained that there may soon be an opportunity for someone to take on a co-ordinating role and that it would be beneficial to have a business voice. Members agreed that the Chamber could potentially be part of something larger with a stronger collective voice and would like to collaborate and share resources etc.

AOB

It was noted that there was a need to review memberships and expenditure in the longer term, including website and marketing costs.

It was agreed that available funds should be used to support the business community, although further discussion is required to determine priorities and future direction.

Two requests for financial support had been received from the WOW Festival and the Moat Race. It was agreed to pause any commitments until a clearer direction has been established moving forward.

Actions

- **Mike and Tom to contact Jill to confirm that the Chamber is interested in being involved in discussions regarding a potential merger, with no commitment to be made without further discussion and consultation with members.**
- **Matt and Judith to contact Merryn Kidd (merryn.kidd@bishopspalace.org.uk) to discuss involvement with Visit Wells and opportunities for collaboration.**

Next Meeting

8 June