



## Minutes of Committee Meeting

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July at 5.45pm in Quay House, Kingsbridge

Vice Chairman: James Spencer  
Treasurer: Peter Richardson  
Secretary: Nicola Coulson

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### 1. Welcome & Apologies

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**PRESENT:** James Spencer, Peter Richardson, Nicola Coulson, Alison Theaker, Scot Baston, Steve Mammatt, Sonia Powell, Catherine Gillen, Georgie Leonard, Cllr Nikki Turton, Cllr Philip Cole, Cllr Rufus Gilbert

**APOLOGIES:** Sarah Burnett, Alex Thompson, Kim Willis, George Rosevear, Cllr Mark Long,

James welcomed committee and introduced new committee members Cllr Philip Cole, Kingsbridge Town Mayor, and Jason Parry, GM of the Harbour Hotels Group.

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### 2. Minutes of Committee Meeting on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022

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Ratified

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### 3. Matters newly arising for committee members - ALL

Rufus introduced 'Young Entrepreneurs', a new project recently launched to support young people in Devon to develop key employability skills and gain an insight into entrepreneurship, funded through Devon County Council's (DCC) £6million recovery programme in response to the pandemic. This is going to be the last big pot of funding as DCC is already financially over-extended.

James asked Rufus if the Chamber could apply to DCC to act as a conduit for distribution of funds to support our Ignite scheme (as per Ignite and Dress to Impress). Rufus asked James to email him and he committed to fast tracking a response.

James asked how Chamber members access available funding? Rufus directed members to the website, or to contact him directly.

Rufus pointed out that whilst he is the keeper of the council budget, he can't keep focus solely on Kingsbridge. James pointed out the wide geographical reach of our members - from Ashburton to Saltash - within Rufus's jurisdiction.

James pointed out that as there are many different funding channels, it would be worth having an officer from Council to do a short 'hot spot' to tell committee about how funds can be accessed - Rufus agreed.

Given previous challenges accessing funds, James asked whether a working group or committee member could pull together a summary of how the current funding could be useful to members and following up with an DCC officer to arrange for them to attend. So we can transform a promise at a top level into realising it on a practical level. Catherine Gillen volunteered.

**Action:** James to contact Rufus with potential dates for DCC officer to do a funding hot-spot in early Autumn

**Action:** Catherine Gillen to summarise current DCC funding

*Rufus left the meeting*

#### **AGM feedback**

James invited members to point out strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to improve on it for next year.

Steve Mammatt felt it should be a lot more inclusive and better publicised, with the meal added as an extra. He reported that a few people had expressed concern about paying £25 - it wasn't sufficiently clear that could attend the meeting for free. He wants to encourage start-up businesses and more small local businesses in attendance.

Alison queried how the panel members were chosen. She pointed out that a couple of the panellists were not members, so wanted to know why we weren't prioritising members. She felt that the purpose of the chamber is to help our members, so why didn't the panel reflect that? Shouldn't the panellists be members?

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James explained that he hoped that the non-member panellists - Tamar HR and SW Growth Service - would sign up but took Alison's point that we should have gone to membership first.

Catherine asked if there was a case for external 'expert speakers' but Alison countered by saying that we have experts within our membership. James suggested that panellists should either be members or "going to be members the day they sign up".

Positive feedback from Catherine who thought it was a 'great event'. It was the first AGM for 3 years and it was a great opportunity to get together. She felt that there were a lot of individual business represented, rather than lots of 'blocks'; she thought it was a great opportunity to meet new people. She agreed that the pricing structure was confusing so felt that a better differentiation between the two parts of the evening would be beneficial. She felt that there was a lost opportunity to do a membership drive - committee members could have been going round and encouraging non-members to sign up at the event.

Alison queried why non-members were attending the AGM. Catherine thought that it was an opportunity to invite people who wanted to join the Chamber.

Scot suggested that we revisit the ticketing; previously we have offered two options - free tickets to attend the AGM only, and tickets that include the cost of a meal. James referred to the January event at Hope Cove House and recalled that there was an appetite for a free event, with an option to eat afterwards. He did point out that there is an economic challenge for the venues we use; currently the venues are offering themselves for free on the understanding that they will generate revenue through the post-event dining, which presents a challenge.

James concurred that the consensus amongst committee was to deliver free events with optional food. Scot pointed out that the poor dining take-up at Hope Cove House may have been because we placed the onus on members to book directly, rather than booking via the Chamber website.

This was Sonia's first AGM and she felt it was a very good balance between "business-y talk" and networking and socialising. She praised the event organisation, particularly given the challenge of finding a new venue, and felt it hit the right tone.

James wrapped up the discussion by invited members to rate the event on a scale of 1 to 10; the average score amongst committee members was 7. James thanked committee and suggested that we try and come up with a ticketing solution that satisfies members AND venues.

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#### 4. Data Foundation project update - Working Group JS, NC & SB

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James summarised the project by explaining that a working group (James, Scot, Kim, and Nicola) had identified that our newsletter mailing list was not reaching our full membership, in part because we have more than one data source. Therefore we were struggling to add value to members.

Scot has developed software to consolidate our data and we are in the process of transferring members' data into one central database. In the future we will be able to break down the membership by sector, number of employees, location, which will allow us to be more targeted in our mailings, marketing, and events. James invited interested members to log in themselves for a tour of the database. James suggested that the data transfer should be complete by the end of July but adding the data manually has been a slow process (15 minutes per entry) so it's taking time.

Scot reported that he is looking into integrating GoCardless with the database to further add value.

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#### 5 Members Forums - ALL

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##### Online Members Only platform 'THE GREEN ROOM' - Working Group JS & KW

*Note: volunteer committee member(s) requested to monitor / facilitate content*

James provided a brief update on the members-only Facebook site, *The Green Room*. Alison challenged the rationale behind the group - she felt that it was speculative; James explained that it was a response to member requests to provide a space for networking to continue between business club meetings - a more private forum than our public Facebook page.

A conversation ensued about the working of the site. James pointed out that the invitation to join hasn't been sent out to the membership - at this stage, only committee members have been invited as Kim was keen to get their feedback.

James suggested that the Facebook group needs to be activated by using the new database to do an introductory communication to members, inviting them to join. It was also agreed that members will only engage if there is sufficiently engaging content - James felt that 12-24 months was a realistic timeframe to see if the group works. He suggested that Kim should engage with the committee so should attend September's committee meeting. Alison suggested that we should be using the forum to post relevant issues that arise from committee meetings - eg Rufus's DCC funding announcements - with relevant links etc. James agreed that in lieu of Gazette

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representation on committee, this is a more immediate way of disseminating information in a timely fashion!

**Action:** Kim to attend September's committee meeting to update committee

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**Business Club dates September and November - NC**

September Business Club - Confirmed for Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September at the Thurlestone Hotel

November Business Club - Provisional date Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November - venue TBC

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**6. Discussion: Strategic Consideration 5 of 5: Business Space for the area - James**  
*Is there enough? If not, do we know what's needed? Next steps on this matter*

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Sonia started by stating that there is a demand for workshop space rather than office space in Modbury and the surrounding area (including Ermington) - in fact, Modbury has office spaces that have been vacant for months. Steve concurred that there is no commercial space in Kingsbridge either. South Hams Business Park is also full; sales or rental turnaround is almost immediate, and people are queuing up for units. James asked committee whether anyone knew whether the new Baker Estates K5 planning application (approved), which included light industrial space, was going ahead? Philip Cole confirmed that they are proceeding with 5 or 6 business spaces. Steve queried whether light commercial space would work on a residential estate. He also mentioned potential for more units at Torr Quarry but reported that a lot of businesses don't want to be out of Kingsbridge.

James asked about the availability of office space in Kingsbridge. Steve reported that he is a bit behind Sonia in terms of offering flexible office space. Sonia reported more requests for private offices rather than hot desks. People like the flexibility of the rolling contract, not having to sign long term leases, and having everything provided.

Nikki reported that there will be a new South Hams Council unit along the end of Gall Road(?) but they are already oversubscribed. Losing Brewery Quay to housing has resulted in some people working from their cars.

Nicola reported that we'd had an enquiry about hot desking in Salcombe and a discussion about available meeting space ensued. The Yacht Club and both Harbour Hotels were cited as potential venues. Alison thought it would be interesting to have a directory of meeting and business spaces; James wondered about having a page on the website listing business spaces in the South Hams. Alison suggested we ask members via The Green Room to notify us of any spaces.

There is a need to find more commercial space. James asked town councillors what the Chamber can do to encourage development. Philip and Nikki agreed that there is no land available for development. James asked if there would be any benefit in the Chamber writing in support of the K5 commercial units? As far as Philip is aware, the development IS going ahead - the question is when as Baker Estates have over-extended themselves with developments in Malborough and Dartmouth. Philip concurred with James' suggestion to raise the flag with Mark Long and Rufus Gilbert that this is a problem that needs to be addressed - that it's got to happen faster than it is. We might also raise the flag that if businesses are generating well paid jobs with decent employment, the need for affordable housing may be slightly less of an issue.

Sonia raised the issue of business park signage and an ongoing conflict between business owners and SHDC, which is now requesting business owners apply for planning permission (with an upfront fee of £180 whether planning is approved or not). Do we want to support the businesses? Steve pointed out that the some of the roadside signage is a mess and is distracting to drivers; he recommended that the business owners have an information board, as Lee Mill and Ermington have done.

Catherine said that signage in Modbury has been discussed at the Parish Council and it has been suggested that a sub-committee, headed by Parish Councillor, George Rosevear, is formed to look at signage in more detail.

In practical terms, what can the Chamber do? We can have a committee member on the Modbury working group which might add favour with SHDC. The Chamber can also write to the council in support of any planning application. James is keen for the committee to support Modbury so would like to add regular updates to the agenda.

Scot added that the map of Kingsbridge seems to have worked locally, although this would need to be regularly updated to reflect the changing businesses. Nicola mentioned the challenges that Endeavour Boatstore in Loddiswell are having in terms of signage to their unit, which is set back from the main road. A lively discussion then ensued about curbside signage and the distraction it can present to drivers.

Concluding the discussion on business space, James asked if there was a passion amongst committee to suggest to members that continues to be a strategic priority for the next 12 months.

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Catherine strongly agreed, but Alison said it was important to not to over-promise if the land isn't there. Nikki said that at planning events, a letter from the Chamber supporting or objecting would have no greater influence than an individual. Philip concurred that Kingsbridge Town Council has no power regarding planning; the planning committee is an advisory body - the decision is made by SHDC. Regarding the Chamber's influence, James recalled that previously the Chamber did influence the decision not to put pay and display meters up Fore Street. Philip said that turning up in person to planning meetings - and keeping it short - is a more powerful response.

**Action:** Investigate setting up a page on Chamber website signposting local meeting spaces.

**Action:** Add Modbury's signage issues onto the monthly agenda.

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## 7. Treasurer's update - Peter

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Peter gave his Treasurer's update. The Chamber has about £2,800 remaining after dipping into resources to supplement the grant payments. There are no outstanding grants, and whilst Peter mooted the idea of setting up a second Ignite grant to help start-ups, the Chamber doesn't have the resources to do that.

Catherine raised the question of a £5k Covid grant from the District Council to be dispersed to the high street. She questioned a £10k grant that she thought was also due, but Peter explained that any funds have already been distributed, including DTI and Ignite grant beneficiaries in Modbury. Significant efforts to apply to DCC for additional funding have come to nothing. When further pushed by Catherine, Peter explained that £2k was ringfenced for Modbury as part of their joining arrangement. Catherine requested evidence of where the money had gone so James explained that the new database will allow us to give a breakdown of grant recipients in Modbury.

**Action:** To develop a CRM report to demonstrate grant distribution in Modbury area

Peter announced that, after 15 years, he intends to stand down as Treasurer as soon as possible so a replacement needs to be found as a matter of urgency.

**Action:** James committed to finding a replacement by Christmas *latest*.

*Philip Cole excused himself from the meeting.*

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## 8. Council Reports

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### District & County: South Hams District Council and Devon County Council

No council representatives in attendance.

### Salcombe Town Council

Nikki reported that:

- There is still no park-and-ride bus.
- The TIC has staffing problems - they are currently recruiting.
- Busy with Regatta season.
- Town Council is looking for a Citizen of the Year to honour the unsung hero.
- Amendment to the Town Plan has gone through the inspector to change the principal residents' policy from being a condition to being a section 106 agreement.
- The Community Land Trust had a public consultation on proposed development of 21 social rented houses - hoping to go to planning in August.
- The Young Salcombe Centre officially opened on 1<sup>st</sup> July - offering term time youth clubs and holiday clubs. It is a charity, entirely funded by donations, grants and fundraising events.

James thanked Nikki for reporting on Salcombe's behalf and explained that ideally we would like to have Vice-Chairs from Salcombe, Kingsbridge and possibly Modbury, within the next 12 months. Nikki expressed hope that the new TIC would send representation to committee also. James offered help with recruitment if needed.

### Kingsbridge

No council representation in attendance.

### Modbury

Catherine raised the proposed closure of Church Street in Modbury for 3 months, from January 2023, to lay new pipes. This will mean closure of the main arterial route, which will be "a nightmare". James offered a letter from the Chamber in support, if necessary.

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## 9. AOB

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- **Salcombe parking capacity**

James raised the issue of parking in Salcombe; the District Council is creating more business spaces, which is taking away from general parking. Nikki revealed that one of the District Council's wish list ideas is to extend the top level of Shadycombe car park.

- **Local charities representatives as Associate member? *Carried over until next meeting***

- **Survey membership September again for next 12mth strategic goals?**

James asked if anyone had any issues with giving members 6 to 10 goals and we ask them to vote on the top 5 at our next event. Scot asked that these are distributed in advance to allow proper consideration.

Alison suggested that we do an online poll/link amongst members who may not attend the event. Committee agreed that 5 strategic goals is ideal for the coming year.

James invited committee to think about what strategic priorities they'd like to include - things that are getting in the way of their business, or business locally.

Sonia asked if we'd achieved last year's priorities. James broke it down into output (under Skills for the Area, the jobs board in the Information Centre is the only jobs board in the town). Could there be more Chamber working groups with a list of to-do's over the next 12 months?

- Alison raised the ongoing issue of internet access.
- James queried whether access points to Plymouth are an issue? Steve agreed that we need better connection to the A38, and everyone concurred that we would like to see improved public transport to and from Plymouth and Ivybridge.
- Scot would like to see the panel discussion at events focus less on employment, more on how small businesses can get more income coming in.
- Alison raised the issue of member benefits; James explained that the offering has been consolidated into postcards.

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**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Then bi-monthly, on the first Wednesday of the month.

**Action:** Dates to be circulated - 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 5<sup>th</sup> June

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