



## **Minutes of the Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry ('the Chamber')**

### **Annual General Meeting, held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at the Hermitage Hotel, Bournemouth,**

**Present:** Liz Willingham (LW), Ian Girling (IG), James Robinson (JR),  
Sarah Milton (SM) (Minutes)

**And 57 Members, and 6 DCCI Chamber staff**

#### **Welcome and Call to Order**

At 10:30 am (LW) took the chair and called the Meeting to order. She welcomed Members of the Chamber to the Annual General Meeting and invited the Chief Executive Ian Girling, to read the formal convening notice.

#### **1. Formal Convening Notice and Apologies**

(IG) read the convening notice: *"This is the Annual General Meeting of Dorset Chamber of Commerce, and as advised it is being held at The Hermitage Hotel, Bournemouth, on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019.* (IG) asked Members of the press to identify themselves. None were in attendance.

#### **2. Approval of the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting**

(LW) then asked Members to confirm that the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at The Hallmark Hotel, Bournemouth, Carlton, were a true record of that Meeting.

**The approval of the Minutes was proposed by Simon West, seconded by Ian Cambrook, and approved by everyone present as a true record.**

(LW) then invited (IG) to announce the results of the on-line ballot for Elected Ambassadors and to confirm the new Office Bearers.

#### **3. Confirmation of Office Bearers and Announcement of the result of the postal ballot for Elected Ambassadors**

(IG) updated in accordance with the Chamber governance process that the following are nominated for the roles of Office-Bearers:

President: Liz Willingham

Senior Vice President: Stephen Mills

Junior Vice President: Caron Khan

(IG) then requested a motion to formally ratify the appointment of the named individuals by way of a single motion. **This was proposed by Stuart Buchan, seconded by Kimberley Davies and agreed by everyone present (57 votes); there being no abstentions.**

(IG) then requested a vote be held for each of the Office Bearers:

President: The Members have confirmed by a clear majority that Liz Willingham be elected as President of Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry for the following year until the AGM in 2020. The outcome of the vote was noted and is listed within the 2019/20 AGM file held at Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Senior Vice President: The Members have confirmed by a clear majority that Stephen Mills be elected as Senior Vice President of Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry for the following year until the AGM in 2020. The outcome of the vote was noted and is listed within the 2019/20 AGM file held at Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Junior Vice President: The Members have confirmed by a clear majority that Caron Khan be elected as Junior Vice President of Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry for the following year until the AGM in 2020. The outcome of the vote was noted and is listed within the 2019/20 AGM file held at Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

***Liz Willingham was elected as President, Stephen Mills was elected as Senior Vice President, and Caron Khan was elected as Junior Vice President***

(IG) continued that regarding Non-Executive Directors, the Board have resolved that two Members should continue in office as Non-Executive Directors for the year 2019/2020 until the next AGM: Nicky Busst and Simon Boyd. Both have stated that they are pleased to continue to serve. Additionally they have also resolved the appointment of a new Non-Executive Director, Nicola Newman and she has confirmed that she is pleased to serve. The Board invited Members to approve a resolution for the 2 non-executives continuation in office for a further year.

(IG) then requested a motion to formally ratify the appointment of the named individuals by way of a single motion

Nicky Busst: **This was proposed by James Akin-Smith, seconded by Chris Slocock**

Simon Boyd: **This was proposed by Paul Collins, seconded by Sheena Dayman**

***Members present approved the resolution for the continuation in office of Nicky Busst and Simon Boyd for a further year.***

(IG) updated that regarding Elected Ambassadors there were eight nominees for the role of Elected Ambassadors and in accordance with the articles Ambassadors being no fewer than eight and no more than sixteen, there were six spaces available Consequently an online ballot for Elected Ambassadors was held. All candidates received votes in their favour bringing the council of Elected Ambassadors to sixteen in total. The candidates elected were:

Oliver Arnold  
Debbie Frith  
Ian Jones  
Alice Smee

Susan Turner  
Elaine Wilkins

(IG) then confirmed that these candidates were duly elected as Elected Ambassadors of the Council and thanked them for their willingness to serve the Chamber and congratulated them all. He then went on to say a vibrant and active Council is essential to the Chamber fully representing its Members and business in Dorset.

(IG) also congratulated Tony Brown on his appointment as Chair of the Council of Ambassadors prior to this AGM. He also recorded his appreciation for the services of the Chambers long serving Chair of Council of Ambassadors Chris Slocock and Deputy Chair Ian Cambrook, following their resignation from Council before presenting Hampers to them both.

#### 4. **Adoption of New Articles**

(IG) stated that the articles had been reviewed in accordance with good governance standards and a new set of articles have been approved by the Board in October 2019.

**The approval of the articles was proposed by Simon West , seconded by Tony Brown and agreed by everyone present (57 votes); there being no abstentions.**

#### 5. **Financial Report**

(JR) began his financial report by introducing himself as the Honorary Treasurer of Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He began by outlining his agenda before updating on the trading performance for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

He highlighted some of the successes which included:

An increase in sales year on year (£94K to £903K, compared to the previous year of £809K).

International Services continued to be an excellent contributor with the export documentation producing a turnover of £294K to March 2019. (JR) explained this equated to the exporting of commercial goods from Dorset businesses to the value of £163M. (JR) then went on to say that this was due to export customers stock piling due to the uncertainty around Brexit, and that levels are now back in line with our current budget. He then said that we have continued to expand the export documentation training program which has enhanced the international services and sales to our customers.

Membership income remains steady at 26% of turnover to the sum of £233K to March 2019, an increase of £5,000 on the previous year. Membership numbers as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 stood at 700 members.

Business Partners Program continues to support the Chamber to the value of £130K, to the year ending March 2019, which saw an increase of £7,000 on last year's income. (JR) recorded his thanks, on behalf of the Board, for all the Business Partners invaluable support.

The events team introduced new events and were proud to work in partnership with The Careers and Enterprise Company in September 2018 on the largest Careers and Apprenticeship event on the South Coast. This saw an increase in turnover to March 2019 of £66,000 which was £25,000 up on last year's income.

Young Chamber continues to provide an extremely valuable role in building links between

education and business. During the last academic year, Young Chamber has supported over 16,000 young people through a variety of activities. (JR) passed on sincere thanks to our sponsors for their support.

(JR) updated on the overheads and he explained that these had been well controlled by the finance department. Total staff costs increased year on year from £466K to £481K. (JR) was pleased to announce that there were no other significant increase in other overheads.

(JR) then went on to say that overall, the accounts show a surplus on ordinary activities before tax of £50,343 and after deducting tax payable of £2,960, we added £47,383 to our reserves. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, Dorset Chamber of Commerce reserves stood at £333K.

(JR) concluded his report summarising that looking forward, the economic climate will obviously present challenges, and conscious of this, the budget to March 2020 anticipated growth in all areas of the chamber and will enable the Chamber to make a small surplus in this current financial year. He then advised that the first half of this year had been on budget except for our International Trade department who are ahead of budget and have continued to see an upsurge in export documentation income due to Brexit.

(JR) then thanked all the our members and customers for their support over the last 12 months as well as thanking Carmel Lewis-Laphorn for all her help and hard work over the years, and wished her well in her retirement, before introducing Lucy Filer, Filer Knapper, the Chambers newly appointed auditors.

## 6. Auditors' Report

Lucy Filer introduced herself and said she was delighted to be working with the Chamber. She said having audited the financial statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, systems were good and that in her opinion these gave a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Chamber as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

She concluded that they have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, and the information given in the Directors report is consistent with the financial statements.

## 7. Re-Appointment of Auditors

(IG) then stated that Filer Knapper had indicated their willingness to continue in office as Auditors to the Chamber and requested that Filer Knapper be elected Auditors for the ensuing twelve months.

**This was Proposed by Matthew Fretten, Seconded by David Banks and agreed unanimously. There were no abstentions.**

## 8. President's Address

(LW) Thanked (IG) before say what a privilege it has been to be President over the past year. She then went on to say that she felt very lucky when it was decided that she could remain President for another year, as this was perhaps a first in the 70 year history of Dorset Chamber.

(LW) then went on to say that it's certainly a year of change. Everyone she had spoken to, every business she had spent time with locally, regionally and nationally has seen significant unprecedented change and it's hard to keep up with. She said that this could be due to the uncertainty of the economic climate, changes in personnel due to market forces – such as the skills shortage - or people voting with their feet and just wanting to put themselves first. She said that as employers we just have to get with the programme and navigate these new waves.

(LW) said that as long as we can keep up with the logistics of such change, it brings fresh thinking, better balance, and a realisation that the future of work could be really quite exciting. She said it doesn't matter if we are in central London or central Bournemouth, the sweating of 14 hour days are not 'de rigueur' right now and frankly that's because we've proven they just aren't sustainable from a HUMAN perspective. And our young entrepreneurs are showing us the way.

(LW) said she was pleased that issues regarding wellbeing, stress in the workplace, and mental health have now become a comfortable and constant topic of conversation within our chamber community. She confirmed that the conference held at the Hall & Woodhouse brewery this year sponsored by Ouch Training was a great success and has been confirmed again for next year.

(LW) then went on to say that whilst we need to continue to work on support structures and maintain awareness for our workforces, we also need to look out for our business owners and leaders too.

(LW) said she believed Dorset Chamber, and perhaps the chamber network generally, is the right place for a central hub, to give this help and support in a confidential manner.

(LW) said she would like to establish a programme that takes the stress in the workplace agenda one step further and actually provides real live support to our membership and beyond.

(LW) then stated that we have a progressive chamber and chamber leadership in our midst, and she felt we are lucky to have that. She said the stuffy perceptions of the past are on their way out, and we are now consistently profitable despite the usual challenges and that good, hard work is being focused on doing the right thing for our members.

(LW) said we are in a period of widespread distrust, fake news, with our politicians accused of lying. She said it is therefore more important to lean on organisations like Dorset Chamber which have the solid foundation and heritage we need to help us through. She then went on to say that our county's businesses are resilient and maintain a positive outlook which carries us through challenging times.

(LW) concluded by saying that Chamber events are extremely popular and vibrant with requests for more. Collaboration is key, joining up the dots and avoiding silos which somehow we in Dorset manage to do very well. She said she is seeing employers reach out to the chamber, our local authorities and other organisations to ask for joined up thinking around attracting talent, to put out there that Dorset is a fantastic place to work and play. She ended by saying that perhaps the tide is turning but she thinks this is a bit of a long haul issue which we all need to keep talking about.

## 9. **Chief Executive's Report**

(IG) welcomed everyone to the 2019 Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry AGM. He reflected on the achievements of the Chamber over the last 12 months as well as looking forward to 2020, also stating this year marked our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

(IG) began by saying that we were re-assessed for our accreditation with the British Chambers of Commerce, which looked at our services, governance and financial health he was delighted to report that our accreditation was very successful with very little follow up action required, he said this accreditation underlines the standards we aspire to achieve.

(IG) was also delighted to announce that this year Dorset Chamber became a Living Wage Employer through gaining accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation, recognising we pay all our staff a wage that is deemed people can live on as opposed to the Government definition of the minimum wage, which also included our contractors such as our cleaners.

(IG) stated that January saw the launch of Dorset Business Focus, our new business magazine, working in partnership with publishers Pulford Publicity. He said the monthly magazine has quickly become established as one of the leading business publications in the South West with a distribution of 5,000 copies per month and an estimated readership of 15,000. (IG) said a huge thank you to the team at Pulford Publicity who he said are an absolute pleasure to work with.

(IG) then went on to say that this year also saw our first Presidents Summer Ball where we honoured our recent Past Presidents. He said the event was particularly special as we launched our new project, Dorset Chamber Life Skills, partnering with Dorset Community Foundation, to raise funds to provide vital employability and life skills for young people in care and care leavers. He announced that during the evening, we asked for donations and we raised £4,000, and said a huge thank you to everyone who donated that evening.

(IG) advised that the £4,000 raised is being used to train 31 business mentors as well as pay for their safeguarding training. (IG) also stated that we held a silent auction to raise funds for the project at the Dorset Business Awards and raised an additional £4,700 for the project, meaning we have raised almost £9,000 in 12 months for this great cause. He then went on to say we are very proud of Dorset Chamber Life Skills and thanked everybody who has contributed to this project.

(IG) thanked the team at Digital Storm for being part of our rebranding, helping to introduce a new, fresh, modern and digital friendly logo which has been very well received and quickly established.

(IG) then moved on to operations, beginning with membership, stating sales have been strong in a challenging climate, with membership currently at 700 and retention at 80%. He stated the average value of a new membership is £357, an increase of 22% over the last 3 years. (IG) went on to say that this year saw the introduction of a major new member benefit with the

launch of Dorset Business Focus magazine, offering members the unique opportunity for coverage in the magazine (and on line) as a part of their membership.

(IG) went on to say that this year has seen another very strong performance on the Business Partner programme, with the programme at capacity with 2 Premier and 29 Platinum Business Partners. Business Partner retention is extremely high and over the last 12 months we welcomed new Business Partners More Excelsior, Crystal Clear Telecoms, Dorset LEP, Image Republic as Video Partner and we welcomed Hendy having taken ownership of Westover. He then thanked our Business Partners for their ongoing support and said he was looking forward to working with them next year.

Moving on to events, (IG) said Dorset Chamber events continue to perform very well. He said this year has seen a wide range of events including our free members only events, packed networking breakfasts and lunches and events focused on innovation and technology and health and well-being. He said we work hard on creating a warm and inviting atmosphere at our events and this comes through in feedback.

(IG) advised that we have also delivered a comprehensive training programme in partnership with our members using our on-line training academy portal. He also said our international trade training programme has been particularly strong as we help build the capacity of businesses to export.

(IG) was delighted to say that 2019 has been a successful year for our international trade department, with an increase in training income alongside our documentation income. He said we have also become one of the first Chambers in the UK to be qualified to deliver a Customs Declaration Service and we have also been actively providing advice and guidance to the business community on issues around Brexit. He said our capacity to deliver this support has been enhanced by the joint funding of a Brexit Adviser by BCP and Dorset Councils meaning we offer all businesses in Dorset a free Brexit advice service.

(IG) also announced that 2019 saw a very successful 25<sup>th</sup> Dorset Business Awards at the BIC attended by around 700 guests. He said the Dorset Business Awards continues to be the premier business event across the whole of the South coast, and he gave thanks to all our sponsors and our excellent AV supplier and Premier Business Partner Brighter Productions as well as BH Live Hospitality at the BIC.

(IG) then informed the room that Dorset Chamber fielded a team to take part in the YMCA/ Street Support Big Sleep Easy, sleeping out overnight in cardboard boxes, raising funds to provide services to help prevent homelessness. He was thrilled to say we raised over £6,000 as a team.

(IG) moved on to talk about our Young Chamber programme, saying it continues to deliver an incredibly valuable service in helping link business and education to help prepare young people for their future lives. He said we work closely with partners such as the local authorities, Careers and Enterprise Company, Young Enterprise and the Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. He then thanked all the sponsors for their support, particularly Bournemouth University and Southern Universities Network. (IG) added that looking to the future, it is essential we can fund this extremely important work if Young Chamber is to be sustainable.

(IG) then went on to say that our profile in the media continues to be strong with the Chamber frequently called upon to comment on key issues affecting businesses and he thanked our PR agency Business Partners Deep South Media for their first-class support.

(IG) also said a very big thank you to our digital business partner Digital Storm for their great creative and technical support on our website.

(IG) then went on to announce that we have exceeded our targets in the delivery of the Dorset Gateway Service, funded by the Dorset LEP, providing a one-stop-shop for business support. He stated that this project has supported a wide range of individuals and businesses across all sectors and feedback has been very positive.

(IG) also said we remain focused on our strategy of not developing dependence on public sector contracts and remaining sustainable as a Chamber on a commercial basis.

(IG) then stated that our focus on partnership continues as we work closely with a range of organisations including both local authorities, the Dorset LEP, higher and further education providers and town Chambers in Dorset.

(IG) said we are also playing a key role in the British Chambers of Commerce South West, a partnership of the five accredited South West Chambers, providing our members with a regional voice on critical issues. He stated that next year will see us identify the three critical issues that our members believe are essential to economic growth and these will form the basis of our campaigning at a regional level.

(IG) then moved on to our Board and Ambassadors, saying a huge thank you to all for their great support. He thanked our President Liz Willingham and congratulated her on her appointment to the board of the British Chambers of Commerce. He also said a special thank you and payed tribute to our Chair of the Ambassadors, Chris Slocock and Ambassador Ian Cambrook, our policy lead, saying their term in office finishes today and he thanked them for many years of great service to Dorset Chamber. He also said a warm welcome to Nicola Newman who joins our board, as well as Tony Brown, who has recently been voted as Chair of Ambassadors and also joins the board in this role.

(IG) concluded by saying that looking to the future, he is delighted to launch our new 2020-2023 Business Plan, detailing our mission, objectives and underpinning targets for the next three years and he encouraged everyone to read this plan, written in consultation with our Board and Ambassadors.

(IG) also announced that 2020 will also see the launch of a new training programme for Dorset Chamber members, included within their membership, covering a wide range of subjects including all aspects of digital marketing, business resilience, leadership and management and health and well-being. He said we will also be launching a new bespoke membership for start-up businesses.

(IG) closed his report by offering his sincere thanks to our members, partners and stakeholders for their support of Dorset Chamber and said a very big thank you to his team, who all work tirelessly with great passion and enthusiasm in doing a thoroughly professional job in a Chamber we are very proud of.



**Any other Business**

10.

The President enquired if there was any other business and as there was none. She said she would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Chief Executive saying that it was appropriate here to recognise the Chief Executives achievements and invited all to record their thanks for a job well done.

**Conclusion of Meeting**

11.

The President thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting by requesting that Members of the Council congregate for a photograph prior to the Xmas lunch. The 2019 Annual General Meeting closed at 11.30 a.m.



10.

11.



