

**Minutes of the 30th Annual General Meeting held at Ashford Business Point
on Friday 1st March 2024.**

Directors: Tudor Price (Chief Executive), Richard Lavender (President), Chris Hare (Chair), Andrew Metcalf (Vice Chair), Ray Johnson, Stuart Whorlow, Natalie Benville, Annette Buss, Tracey Butler, Adam Bryan.

Officers: Lucy Druesne (Chief Contracts & Policy Officer), Neil Vanstone (Chief Operating Officer)

Present: Adam Ready, Adam Walker, Adrian Osborne, Aiden Strong, Alexandra Goodman, Amy Bowles, Andrew Osborne, A Lichnerova, Ayodele Lawal, Bradley Morgan, Bryn Price, Caroline Ward, Chris Sheldon, C Brenchley, Colin Harsant, Damien Gregory, Danielle Cassidy, David Dadswell, David De Min, David Keohane, David Peddie, David Smith, Dom Chudleigh, D Matthews, Gina English, Gracey Wilsher, Graham Car,d Jackie Dawes, James Cole, Jamie McInally, Jane Brook, Jodie Mcdonald, Joe Martin, Jon Baker, Karen Povey, K Munday-Hoctor, Kelly Tanton, Kim Stevens, Laura Bevan, Louisa Jarrad, Mark Alexander, Mark Yates, Matt Sims, Moira Doherty, Nancy Reed, Nick Fresson, Nolan Forwood, Paul Hill, Petar Velchev, Philip Pilgrim, Piotr Bytnar, Richard Stafford, Roddy Barrow, Sam Bearman, Sam Ready, Sandra Heywort,h Sarah Easton, S Gwillam-Winter, Sofia Docwra, Sonia Simmonds, Steve Squires, Suzanne Walter, Tara Capon, Teresa Morgan, Tim Sheppard, Tim Weedon, Tina Firrell, Tom Reveley, Warren Dunham.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the 30th Annual General Meeting and stated that apologies from Members would be recorded in the minutes.

1. Apologies:

James Bullock, Matthew Arnold, Luke Quilter, Julian Barnes, Louise Earl, Renata Geciauskaite, Emma Latter, Anna Shelvey, Bruce Kidd, Nav Mizra, Jo James, Jacqueline Franklin, Jeff Hadaway, Lindsey Biggs, Jen Howell, Tina Pincott, Daniel Sangiuseppe, Joe Ward, Jen Howell

2. Minutes

The minutes of the AGM held on the 29 March 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the President.

Proposed: Tim Sheppard

Seconded: David Keohane

2.1 Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report:

Let me start with reflecting on the past year. The geopolitical situation remained volatile across the globe and continues to impact on the trading environment across the country and we're not immune to this here in Kent, and the impact on our supply chains, export markets, and local economies.

Nevertheless, resilience and adaptability are the hallmarks of our Members and despite these headwinds, businesses continue to trade.

Of course, the Chamber is not immune from these challenges with cuts to public sector funding, falling exports and cost of living issues facing its staff. But, yet again, your Chamber Team have responded to the changing landscape and pulled together as one to deliver the support, protection and representation needed by our Members.

So, we're all in this together.

This year has also been a year of change for the Chamber.

Perhaps the most noticeable change this year has been the departure of Jo James after 33 years of outstanding service and the subsequent appointment of Tudor Price as the Chamber's new CEO.

Jo handed the Chamber over in a great condition and her departure provided an opportunity to restructure the leadership team and shape a Chamber fit for the future under Tudor's direction.

Looking back across the year as Chair there have been so many fantastic activities that the Chamber has delivered and too many to explore in the short time I have today.

So, I would like to indulge you in just a couple that personally stood out for me and illustrate the diversity of what Chamber does.

- Firstly, the Chamber awards in partnership with Kent County Council was yet again a star-studded, glamorous affair celebrating Kent & Medway's businesses and recognising those individuals who have made a difference in the community.
- and secondly, our continued drive to identify the skills gaps in our local economy, and our leadership in bringing education providers together to deliver the Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan. That has certainly kept me on my toes in my day job!

Now, bringing us back to today...

Our policy and representation work has been ramping up as we head into a potential election year when politicians and policymakers switch to listening mode.

We continue to work with the British Chambers policy team in supporting major projects such as Lower Thames Crossing, Gatwick North runway, the return of Eurostar to Kent and Manston Airport to name but a few.

To support this work, we will be reaching out to Members to represent key industry sectors and get involved in our Economic Development Groups as part of a two-way conduit of intelligence and information that will create the best possible environment for our Members. If any of you would like to be involved in our EDGs please drop Tudor a line.

Finally, the year ahead is full of opportunity and whilst there may be challenges along the way for business, your Chamber will be in your corner to support, encourage and represent your interests. Before I go, I would like to take a short moment to also thank my fellow Board Directors. I am very fortunate to work with some awesome people and our board is jam packed with talent – it's represented by folk from finance, law, communication, education, public service, HR, commerce, and a whole lot of life experience.

They are all Kent based professionals who are truly battling for the Members – thank you one and all.

And of course, the Staff here at the Chamber itself, who make it all happen so brilliantly.

So finally, I would like to thank you, the Members, one last time for your continued support as Members of this outstanding Chamber; to encourage you to continue to share your business journeys with us; to engage, collaborate and encourage each other.

4. Annual Report and Accounts:

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 have been approved by the Board and confirmed by the Auditor.

Adoption of Accounts:

Proposed: Tim Welland

Seconded: Mandy Bearne

Vote: Carried

5. Directors

5.1 Since the last AGM, the following Members have resigned as Directors on the Board:

Miranda Chapman, Jo Worby, Tim Allen, Tracey Kerly, Carole Barron, Jo James, John Taylor, Richard Hicks, John Keefe

5.2 The following Members will continue for the second year of their elected term:

Chris Hare

5.3 The following Members will continue for the third year of their elected term:

Ray Johnson, Luke Quilter

5.4 The following Members have completed the third year of their elected term and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election:

Stuart Whorlow, Nick Hawley, Andrew Metcalf, Richard Lavender

5.5 The following Members have been co-opted during the year and being eligible, offer themselves for election:

Tracey Butler, Matthew Arnold, Natalie Benville, Annette Buss, Adam Bryan

Proposed: Graham Card

Seconded: John Baker

6. Election of President

Richard Lavender has stepped down as President. Richard was thanked by the Chairman for his unwavering stewardship and continued advocacy for Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce whilst serving as President. He was presented with a gift to mark the Chamber's gratitude.

Richard offered his thanks.

Ray Johnson is confirmed as the new President for the coming year.

7. Appointment of Auditor

The Board have appointed Azets who will continue as Auditors for the year 2024/2025

8. Fixing of Auditor's Remuneration

The Chairman asked for authorisation for the Board to fix the Auditors fees.

Proposed: Richard Stafford

Seconded: Richard Lavender

Vote: Carried

9. Any other business

None

The Chairman then handed over to the CEO for an update.

10. Chief Executive Update

Thank you Chair and thank you fellow Directors for your commitment to the Chamber and I look forward to working with you closely over the next year to take the Chamber forward. Since I have only been in post a short time, I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself, introduce the team and share a little about the plans we have for the future.

But before I do that, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the great service to the Chamber of my predecessor Jo James. The solid foundations upon which we now stand are a testament to her strength of character and good leadership. Thank you, Jo.

A quick bit about me, as you can tell I am a proud a Welshman, I come from the land with the coolest flag, I used to play competitive rugby and I have new knees to show for it and yes, I sing in a Male Voice Choir. Married with two grown up children I live near Maidstone and I have been here at the Chamber for over a decade. Prior to that I held senior posts in logistics and recruitment and set up and sold my own business. And if you go right back in history, I used to be a professional Actor.

The Chamber is often referred to as a family and so allow me to introduce you to my nearest and dearest.

Neil Vanstone – Chief Operations Officer. Neil looks after the overall running of the business back office and is responsible for the delivery of the strategic plan and vision as agreed by the SMT, Neil also has direct responsibility for the Membership, Events, and International Team.

Lucy Druesne – Chief Contracts and Policy Officer. Lucy is a self-confessed contracts nerd, technology fan and French. Lucy looks after the delivery of all our contracted services such as the Local Skills Improvement plan (more on that later), the Growth Hub, our many Business Support services for Local Authorities and moving forward will be working with me more closely on our policy and representation.

Steph Stevens - Financial Controller, paper hater, digital guru, and has an obsessive eye for detail. Steph holds the purse strings, pays the bills, and delivers the very important and critical function of producing our management accounts.

And of course, behind these talented people, we have an equally talented and committed team of people who are here to serve the needs of our Members.

So, what does the year ahead look like,

Well, we have already started making some small changes operationally under the guise of Project Darwin. This was a project devised at the back end of last year by the Senior

Management Team to modernise and digitise many of the back-office processes as well as to engage the wider Team in the transition of leadership.

Many of these changes will take place behind the scenes but you may notice more automation in certain things such as payments, digital marketing collateral, industry re-classification, and greater use of our CRM.

On a wider front, our intention is to be more joined up in what we do.

The Chamber has a very broad range of interests such as international trade, business advice, skills development, policy and so forth and we intend bringing these disparate specialisms together in a more consolidated service delivery to the benefit of our Membership.

We will also be looking at our current service offer and listening to the needs and wants of our current Members as well as future Members.

The business environment is constantly changing and so too should the services that we provide to ensure our Members are supported and enabled to grow, adapt and be resilient in the face of change.

We will be carrying out consultations with the Team and Members over the coming months and will share more information as we make progress.

I eluded earlier to my theatrical heritage and so it will come as no surprise that we intend stepping up our representation and advocacy on behalf of Members, to influence policyholders and stakeholders and continue to make Kent and Medway the best place to run a business.

We will be providing our Economic Develop Groups with a structured framework to address key local issues and ensure that, through our networks and connections to the British Chamber of Commerce, will create a strong voice for Members not just locally, but regionally and nationally.

To make this happen, we will be entering into partnerships with broadcast outlets and journalists, continuing to champion local infrastructure projects that benefit Kent & Medway, and be inviting Members that sit on our Economic Development Groups to act as a Media Member and represent their sectors in response to press enquiries.

If you would like to be involved in this aspect of our work, please let me know.

Well, I think that's enough to be getting on with for now and given you a flavour of things to come. I am also mindful there is one more agenda item that stands between you and lunch. So, thank you for your kind attention and I will leave you with my working maxim – 'Nothing Changes if Nothing Changes'.

11. Vote of thanks

Given by Graham Card

I was pleased to be asked to give a vote of thanks. I have been a Member of the Chamber since the last century, so I feel qualified to do so. My thanks go to the Directors that steer the ship, and to the staff for everything that they do to represent the business community of Kent and bring Members together. My thanks also to the Members for their continued support.

The AGM was closed by the Chairman at 12.40pm