



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

4th June 2019
At 6.30pm at
Cannizaro House Hotel du Vin, Wimbledon Common

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

John Merriman, Chair of Merton Chamber, welcomed guests to the 27th AGM, with special thanks to the newly elected Mayor of Merton Cllr. Janice Howard, and her consort as well as Leader of the Council, Stephen Alambritis. for joining the meeting.

He also thanked Peacock & Co solicitors for sponsoring the Networking evening to follow, and to Hotel du Vin for hosting the event once again.

John ran through the agenda items and confirmed that the meeting was quorate, in accordance with the Mems & Arts and introduced Diana Sterck, CEO who started the meeting with a review of the year.

Review of the Year

Diana Sterck, then looked to review the achievements of the last year:

- In 2018 the team at Merton Chamber reviewed our strengths in terms of the value we give to our members, and concluded that we specialise in:
 - Connecting
 - Community
 - Celebrating
 - Championing
 - Compliance

Members of the audience were signposted to the infographic on their chairs to illustrate these activities. In summary these are:

- **Connecting:** This is our specialty. As the team in the Chamber has been around for a long time, are well connected and know how the borough works. During the year the Chamber had an average of 607 members, including 18 Premier and a new Patron member – and Diana thanks Hartley Fowler Chartered Accountants for taking up that opportunity. Business to Business events are the speciality of the Chamber with 19 networking events being held during the course of the year, with over 1050 guests attending. A new initiative for the year was the Merton Business Leaders' Forum, sponsored by Morrisons Solicitors. These events are by invitation only, to the largest 50 employers in Merton who together account for around 30% of all jobs in the borough.



It is important to the Chamber to showcase the Premier and Patron members, this is achieved in a number of ways, including the bi-annual Premier Profile online magazine.

- **Community:** Nine months ago Merton Giving was launched, a partnership between the community and the business sector, aiming to connect business to local good causes. Businesses do so much locally. With Merton Giving as the umbrella brand we have so far connected with over 600 businesses and leveraged £30,000 of business support into the local community sector. We organized a Merton Giving week and we launched the Merton Giving fund – with £20,000 about to be shared between 40 charities – the themes are addressing young people and their development, building a healthy community and bringing neighbourhoods and communities together.
- **Celebrating:** The Chamber has been running the Merton Best Business Awards for six years now – they've grown year on year and last year we had nine sponsors and over 120 applications in 16 categories. The awards culminate in a prestige gala event at the All England Club and over 220 people attended. Going back to Merton Giving the evening raised £3,000 through a silent auction and raffle to help our local communities.
- **Championing:** Being the voice of business is incredibly important to Merton Chamber and this year, despite Brexit, there have been a good number of consultations on policy that will effect business – so we have carried out surveys of our members to get their views, submitted written responses and attend many policy influencing boards and meetings.
- **Complying:** The Chamber has always believed that demonstrating leadership in running a good business is important and part of that is helping to support businesses to meet their legal obligations by running courses covering health and safety, First Aid and Fire warden.

Chair, John Merriman, then invited two members – Simon Walker from the award winning SPS Timber Windows, and Dave Dadds from Premier Member Qudo – to join him. He then interviewed them about the benefits the Merton Best Business Awards and being a long-standing member of Merton Chamber has had on their respective businesses.

The Chair, John Merriman, then took members through the formal AGM.

Formal AGM

Apologies were received from Arshad Daud, Flexicom Solutions; Kevan Dunne, The Generator Business Centre; Ivor Heller, AFC Wimbledon; Charles Hylton-Potts, Peacock & Co; John D'Aprano, DS Systems; Carol Andrews, Wimbledon Village Stables; Alex Lewis, Lewis & Co; Chris Lee, London Borough of Merton; Steve Dixon, Wimbledon Business Studio.

The formal AGM proceeding then followed:

- **To approve any matters arising from the minutes of the AGM held in 2018 and to address any matters arising from these Minutes.** Formal apologies (see above) were noted, and the Minutes of the last AGM held on 5th June 2018 were accepted as an accurate record of



proceedings and were unanimously received. There were no actions. Proposed by: Dave Dadds, Qudo; Seconded by Sally Hodgson, Izzytea Ltd.

Chairs Report

Looking forward – Carry on with the 5C's theme

Connecting: With effect from 1st July 2018 businesses based on the Willow Lane Business Improvement District will join Merton Chamber as members. This will bring membership to around 750 businesses.

Networking activity will continue through events; including influencing young professionals to network as the next generation of business leaders. The Chamber will continue to engage with the larger employers working with Morrisons Solicitors on issues key to those business leaders, such as transport infrastructure, recruitment and skills

Introducing new initiatives: At the AGM last year the Chair said that Merton Chamber would explore the potential to run a Business Expo – this hasn't got lost and it will be reviewed in the year ahead; along with new initiatives on a needs and opportunity basis.

Community Working with MVSC continues to expand Merton Giving, with a 5 year plan and another Merton Giving week in December this year.

Celebrating: 2019 will see a step change in the running of the Merton Best Business Awards, when Directors of the Chamber took the decision to bring the organisation in-house rather than use an outsourced company. John was pleased to announce that there are more sponsors than ever before, plus a new online application system has been introduced and the applications are being submitted ahead of the deadline on 21st June. Organisation of the prestigious gala event on 26th September is well underway at The All England Lawn Tennis Club. John thanked all our sponsors.

The Chambers' work **Championing** businesses will continue, with many consultations ahead. This include Merton Council's 10 year Local Plan, more on the Sutton to Wimbledon transport link and the Wimbledon and Morden plans which are slowly coming to fruition.

Complying – the Chamber believes this is part of their role to influence business to be good business and to support them in meeting their legal obligations with workshops continuing in the months ahead.

John announced that to help support bringing all the work together, a new website has been launched. The audience were shown the new website, along with a Members' Gallery covering the activities that Merton Chamber carries out.

John then asked the meeting to approve:



- **Proposal to increase membership subscription.** Proposed to raise membership subscription in-line with Consumer Price Index. Proposed: Paul Harvey, Morrisons Solicitors. Seconded: Simon Marsh, WSM Business Advisory.

Financial Review

Diana then moved on to the Chamber's financial position.

2017/18 was one of the most challenging in the Company's history.

In recent years, up to 90% of the Chamber's turnover was been derived from contracts awarded by local and regional government. Due to austerity measures and changes to the way government funds, this income is no longer available. As a result, there has been a big reduction in the Chamber's turnover and a reduction in some services that were being delivered for the benefit of the business community.

To compound this, the lease on the managed offices that the Chamber operated at the Generator Business Centre expired in December 2017. The Directors did not consider that it was in the commercial interest of the Company to accept a new lease with a fivefold increase in rent. This resulted in a further decrease in turnover.

The Company has been restructured, costs reduced, and moved offices to accommodate these major structural changes in activities. Moving forward into 2019 the Chamber as a lower turnover but with a budget that is manageable. The Directors are satisfied that the Company now has a sustainable platform to continue to service members. Membership remains buoyant and will grow next year. The accounts show that the Chamber is solvent, the balance sheet shows a small amount of reserves, the cash flow through to April 2020 is positive and the business awards are making a positive influence on finances.

John then asked the meeting to propose and second:

- **To receive and adopt the accounts of the Company for the year ended June 2018.** The accounts had been approved by our Finance Committee, as prepared by Hartley Fowler LLP. They had been approved by the Board and it was recommended that the accounts were received by the membership. The accounts were also available on the website, and at the back of the room. The accounts were unanimously approved.
Proposed: Simon Walker, SPS Timber Windows; seconded by: Simon Marsh, WSM Business Advisory.
- **To appoint accountants of the Company.** The Chair recommended that our accountants for over 15 year, Hartley Fowler LLP, were re-appointed for another year and this was unanimously approved. The Chair thanked Hartley Fowler for their support and their work on the Finance Committee.



Proposed: Naomi Martin, Commonsense Community Development Trust; Seconded: Nina Assam, Soora Photography.

- **To re-appoint existing members of the Board of Directors.** The Chair then introduced the Board to the audience and thanked them for a fantastic job over the last year and for their support. John Merriman, Nick Samuel, Naomi Martin, Nick Frank, Janet Borrow, Delrose Earle, and James McGinlay who is co-opted from the London Borough of Merton.
Proposed by Lucy Kane, Time & Leisure Magazine; Seconded: Katie Driver, Thinking Alliance.
- **To appoint new members to the Board of Directors:** Charles Hylton-Potts, Peacock & Co; Sarah Horrell, South Thames Colleges Group and Arshad Daud, Flexicom Solutions.
Proposed: Steve Bennett, Safety Delivery; Seconded: Naomi Martin, Commonsense Community Development Trust

The formal proceedings of the AGM were then concluded, with no further formal motions.

John then introduced and thanked the Sponsor for the evening's networking and a long standing Premier member who has got involved in the Merton business community – through sustainability by registering for the Refill scheme; Merton Giving and seeing how they can support Merton Giving week and the one of the Partners has just been appointed to the Board of Directors.

Thanks were given to Clare Chappell from Peacock & Co who wrapped up the evening by talking about the themes covered during the presentation.

The audience was thanked for joining Merton Chamber of Commerce at the AGM and Diana and the Chamber team then invited guests to network.