**Minutes of the Eastbourne & District Chamber of Commerce Ltd**

**T/A Eastbourne *unLtd* Chamber of Commerce**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 17th June 2021**

**Commenced at 6.00pm**

**Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club, Eastbourne and online via Zoom**

**PRESENT**

**Nicky Fisher (via Zoom) President**

**Christina Ewbank Chief Executive**

**Caroline Ansell Guest Presenting**

**Stephen Holt and Luke Johnson Guest presenting**

**And 25 Members, Staff and Guests physically, plus 16 online**

**Housekeeping**

Christina Ewbank went through housekeeping for Covid-19 safety and for the members attending via Zoom. All members and guests were provided with clean masks and asked to observe physical distancing measures. The open windows provided fresh air ventilation throughout the meeting.

She also introduced the anonymous voting App, Slido, and password to allow all members voting rights whether in the room or online. The password was also shared to members via email and on the rolling slide presentation.

She then passed over to the President, Nicky Fisher via Zoom.

**1 Welcome**

The President introduced Gary Mead the Commodore of Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club who gave a brief welcome speech to all the members and guests.

SHYC will be live on BT Sports on 23, 24, 25 July with a sea competition. They will be going down to the Solent and cameras will be installed. There will be a huge media launch.

There will also be a beach clean up on 25th June when photographs will be taken. They will do their best to put Sovereign Harbour and Eastbourne on the map.

The President then introduced the ‘top table’ to the meeting including CEO Christina Ewbank in the room and online; Neville Beckhurst (Treasurer) Nathan Coker (Auditor) and herself (President).

The President also thanked the many councillors present both online and physically saying that we really appreciate the support we get from the local council. Our honoured guests include:

* Caroline Ansell MP
* Cllr Stephen Holt, Deputy Leader, BID CEO and Leader of the Eastbourne Recovery Plan
* Cllr Robert Smart – Council Opposition Leader
* Cllr Paul Metcalfe MBE
* Cllr Penny Di-Cara
* Cllr Josh Babarindhe
* Cllr Helen Burton
* Cllr Joanna Whippy and
* Luke Johnson Your Eastbourne BID Operations Manager

The president made special mention of Southern IT who will be handling the technical side of the Hybrid AGM.

**2** **Notice of Meeting** The formal notice convening the meeting was proposed by Shoes, seconded by Chris Wilson and taken as read on a 100% Slido vote.

**[There was then a complete power outage at SHYC and the Harbour area in general which lasted from 6.10 to 8.30pm. Therefore, the remainder of the meeting was connected using the Chief Executive’s mobile phone. As the CEO was unable to unmute in Zoom, the proposing and seconding was done wholly online until section 7.]**

**3** **Apologies**

ThePresident read the list of apologies from Members, Guests and Directors including: David Tutt EBC Leader, Rob Cottrill EBC CEO, Tim Cobb CobbPR, Annemarie Field The Herald, Richard Garland Gradient Consultants, Mark Snashall Professional Video Services, Joe Hill Towner and Neil Avis Langney Shopping Centre.

**4 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 23rd July 2020** had been posted on line in accordance with the Constitution and were taken as read. Approval of the Minutes was carried unanimously in a proposal by Mark McFadden seconded by Ashley Pugh.

**5 Annual Accounts and Auditor’s Report to 31st December 2020** The President said abbreviated accounts had been displayed on the website for over 21 days and distributed via an e-shot in accordance with the Constitution. She then introduced the Auditor:

**Nathan Coker of Price & Co**

Good evening to all at this AGM in person or online.

We have completed our audit work and as in previous years the full draft accounts for the year to 31 December 2020 are available on the chamber website. These are only draft in so far as they are awaiting approval at this meeting.

Obviously last year was a difficult year, and like many members the Chamber was affected financially with membership income slightly reduced at £60,000. Rental income increased slightly to £54,000, but it was not possible to hold meetings or events for much of the year. Despite this, the gross surplus only fell by 2% to £114,000.

The cost of overheads and loan interest this year was higher at £120,000, mainly from increased staff costs, so without government support The Chamber would have incurred a deficit of £6,000. Thankfully grants of £10,000 were received, so the actual result was a small surplus.

As mentioned last year, the Chamber had reasonable reserves and expected to continue operating through the pandemic, and this has proven to be the case with an extremely busy year.

No issues came to our attention during the audit which we would need to report to members so we were able to sign off an unqualified audit report on the accounts.

There were no questions. The accounts were proposed by Mark McFadden, seconded by Ashley Pugh and carried by a 100% Slido vote.

**6 President’s Report for 2020/21/22**

**Nicky Fisher**

As we all know, 2020 has been a tough year for the Chamber and for many of our members.

Like you, we didn’t know what to expect in March 2020 during the first lockdown and were reacting daily to the fast-moving guidance coming out of various government departments. We carried out an emergency cashflow in April and we estimated that our reserves would last two years in a worst-case scenario.  Fortunately, that scenario has not been realised.

We are still monitoring our rental income and subscriptions very closely and, to control costs, the pandemic saw the staff furloughed for a period of time. Due to our cost control, we have been able to support members and tenants through the year with payment and rental holidays when necessary.

Eastbourne Borough Council asked us to represent all businesses in the town during the first lockdown, not just our members.  As a result, we were able to lobby various government channels to support local businesses and members during lockdown.  We have spoken regularly to Caroline Ansell MP, various Ministers, the Cabinet Office and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, and with the MP’s staunch support and also the support of BBC South East and BBC Radio Sussex we have been able to secure the support detailed below.

Working closely with our partners at the Eastbourne Hospitality Association and Your Eastbourne BID we have managed to secure this vital assistance:

* In April we introduced weekly Eastbourne COBR Meetings to manage the fast-moving situation - these are now being held monthly.
* Furlough was extended to self-employed people through SEISS.
* Grants were extended to tenants who did not pay their own rateable value.
* Grants were extended to businesses with over £51,000 rateable values.
* The CBLS and BBLS repayment periods were extended.
* Flexible Furlough was introduced to help us all get back to work.
* The Furlough programme has been extended three times.
* VAT was reduced 75% for the hospitality sector and this has been extended.  We continue to lobby for a permanent extension of this 5% VAT rate.
* The business rates holiday was extended for the hospitality and retail sectors.
* The hardship grants were opened up to all sectors of our membership.
* Reduced prices for PPE were arranged by bulk buying with the EHA and the BID.
* We promoted the Covid Ready kitemark; the first of its kind in the UK which is now being rolled out across the country.
* We pushed for a judicial review of Business Interruption Insurance and are beginning to see a few local businesses paid out.

Unfortunately, we have not been successful in all areas, namely; getting more support for home workers; getting grant support for directors paid dividends when their income fluctuates and; getting support for new businesses who had not had the chance to file accounts.

We continue to lobby the government in all these areas.

During the first Lockdown the situation was changing so fast we were sending out daily updates to make sure our members knew what was happening and what financial support they were entitled to.  On some days, these updates were going out three times as the situation was evolving so fast!

Once things had settled down, we reverted to adding news to the website homepage and we continue to put the latest news there, rather than overload your email inboxes.

We also supported members to apply for grants and have been able to ensure that those asking for help received the financial support they were entitled to.

We are still working on the Eastbourne Recovery Programme with all our partners and are heading up the Levelling Up Fund Bid to bring up to £20 million investment into the town.

As a result of our work, despite buying new premises in November 2019 and the cost of moving into new offices, at the end of the year we came into 2021 with stronger financial reserves than ever before and we continue to use these for the benefit of our members and the local economy.

We commenced a weekly virtual networking event on a Wednesday morning which has become very popular with some members and will continue for the time being even though we are beginning to meet face to face.

To date this year we have had two face to face events which sold out very quickly, the first being a lunch at The Rainbow and the second a breakfast at the Eight Bells last week – keep an eye open for more face to face events as restrictions start to ease.

I’d like to take this opportunity to congratulate our member the Identity Group for running the G7 Summit in Cornwall. This is a great accolade for global Eastbourne and for the Identity team. The summit went off without incident - no letters fell off their signage!

**2021/22**

I have some really good news to report! The council has secured over £200,000 funding from the government from the Welcome Back Fund. Our thanks go to Lisa Rawlinson and Stephen Holt who successfully put the bid together in double quick time!

In the survey completed by over 3000 People earlier this year, it was clear that over 88% of people search for accommodation and restaurants online so SEO is vital. You are nowhere if you are on the second page of a google search! The Welcome Back Fund includes £22,000 for the Chamber to help hospitality businesses improve their Search Engine Optimisation and Digital Communications. If you want some 1-2-1 SEO development, let us know.

The next big project we are working on is to secure the £20 million Levelling Up Fund for Eastbourne. We are competing with other coastal communities to win this investment in the town and ask for your support to communicate it positively with everyone you know.

In Eastbourne, our main industry is ‘Tourism’. This is a traditionally seasonal business and so we are using the LUF Bid to increase visitor numbers all year round, providing job stability in winter as well as in summer.

We are also concentrating on engaging the wider community in our LUF project.

Many people think affluent Eastbourne does not need government funding, but it is a fact that four areas in Eastbourne are in the most deprived 10% in the country. One is in the worst 4%, putting us on a par with the most deprived areas in Birmingham, Blackpool, Jaywick and Hastings.

To create our bid, we invited ideas from across the town. Over 45 suggestions were received, and these were whittled down to those most likely to succeed in winning the funding. The rules of the LUF Bid are very tight and so we have settled on these three ideas to make the biggest, most visible, difference to our town:

1. Firstly, we are aiming to turn Terminus Road into a Las Ramblas style pedestrian walkway with a highly colourful, 7 metre wide cover stretching 170 metres down the centre of the road. This will include sustainable lighting and outside infra-red heating along with urban art installations to create an outdoor al-fresco art gallery. The striking awning will feature colourful artist designed panels overhead and will boost the night-time economy of Eastbourne all year round.
2. In 2023, Towner is celebrating its 100th anniversary of being given to the people of Eastbourne. To celebrate, they will be curating 5 art works to be installed across the town, including a large sculpture on the seafront at the end of Terminus Road. The people of Eastbourne will be invited to work with the artists to design and make these installations which will also appear in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
3. Finally, we will be installing a facility to manufacture and exhibit these works of art at Black Robin Farm. It will become a cultural mecca for visitors from all over the world, all year round and, working with the East Sussex College Group, will help disadvantaged teenagers from all over Eastbourne to acquire new skills in metal work, digital communications, creative industries, business administration and hospitality. Transport connectivity will be established by Stagecoach and companies offering electric scooter hire and charging points.

We have received written support for our Bid from the Eden Project, the EHA, the East Sussex College Group, the Victoria Place Traders and from Your Eastbourne BID. We believe that these three elements of the LUF Bid will stimulate in excess of 500 new jobs and 300 apprenticeships and we ask our MP, Caroline Ansell, to support the Bid and champion it actively in Westminster.

In addition to our Levelling Up activity, we redeveloped the Chamber website during lockdown so that you can add your own events to it and edit your page with photographs, logos and information about your business.

We are also developing a range of safe networking and training activities which will be emailed to you and displayed on the new website events page, so watch this space; booking is now really easy.

Subject to government guidelines, our events will include a Fizz on Foot wine tour, a Chamber golf day and a summer BBQ and croquet tournament at the Hydro Hotel and, all being well, we plan to meet for a Christmas lunch this year at the Grand Hotel. Let’s hope Airbourne returns in August 2022!

In the meantime we will be arranging regular “netwalking” events and breakfast and lunch meetings al-fresco.

If our LUF Bid is successful we will be able to meet in our own outdoor gallery and al-fresco dining space in Victoria Place, Terminus Road; Eastbourne’s very own Las Ramblas.

Watch out Barcelona!

The adoption of the report was proposed by Ashley Pugh seconded by Mark McFadden and agreed on a 100% Slido vote.

**7 Election of New President, Vice Presidents and Treasurer 2020/2021** The CEO took over and confirmed that no nominations had been received for the position of President and that Nicky Fisher had confirmed her agreement to remain as President for the forthcoming year.

This was proposed by Shoes and seconded by Steve Christmas with the unanimous approval of all members present, both physically and online. The CEO handed the meeting back to the President.

**8 Election of the Board of Directors -** The Chamber seeks to represent the membership in whatever way possible and similarly, the Board of Directors seeks to be fully representative of the membership as a whole.

**Vice President:** No new nominations have been received for the position of Vice President. The existing vice presidents confirming their agreement to continue in the post are Shoes of Evil Empire Inns, (The Eagle, Dew Drop Inn and The Rainbow) and Russell Colbran, Managing Director of the family owned builders Colbran and Wingrove which has been established in the area for over 50 years.

Proposed by Luke Shevels and seconded Marc Hirst. These nominations for Vice President were carried by a 100% Slido vote.

**Hon. Treasurer:**

There was one nomination for Neville Beckhurst to continue as the Treasurer for another year. This was proposed by Stephen Holt and seconded by Luke Shevels.

**Director Resignation:**

Dinah Ouzman of Zunoma (previously Smith & Ouzman) has stepped down as a director to focus on her business. The President thanked her for her hard work and support.

**Additional directors continuing in office, under the Constitution:**

1. Neville Beckhurst
2. Tim Cobb
3. [Russell](file:///C%3A%5CRussell) Colbran
4. Sarah Dyer
5. Nicky Fisher
6. Richard Garland
7. Stephen Holt
8. Matt Huddart
9. Zoe Lau
10. Ashley Pugh
11. Linda Salway
12. Shoes

**Directors seeking re-election (under the constitution):**

In accordance with the constitution a third of the directors must either stand down and offer themselves for re-election or resign. As one director has resigned, the directors seeking re-election are:

1. Joe Hill CEO Towner Art Gallery
2. Rebecca Conroy CEO East Sussex College Group
3. Mark McFadden Partner SHW
4. Mina O’Brien MD Ditzy Media

**New Director seeking election:**

A nomination had been received under the constitution for a new director, Luke Shevels of Fieldskill Business Support.

Proposed by Simon Groves and seconded by Chris Wilson.

All the directors standing for re-election along with the new director nominated were formally proposed en-bloc by Simon Grove and seconded by Chris Wilson. The motion was carried with a slido vote with 1 objection.

Nicky Fisher thanked the Board for their continued service, hard work and commitment.

**9 Election of Auditors for the financial year 2020/2021**

Neville Beckhurst’s announced that Price and Co were subject to regular review and were recommended as auditors for another year.

Price & Co were proposed by Shoes and seconded by Mina O’Brien and approved unanimously by the members present and online.

The Treasurer thanked Nathan Coker of Price & Co for their work.

**10 Any Other Business**

There being no other business, the President thanked the 21 Premier Members for their invaluable support:

1. *AFH Payroll*
2. *Aspect Metalcraft*
3. *Axisops*
4. *Brewers*
5. *Caffyns Audi*
6. *Earslfield Court Luxury Care Home*
7. *Eastbourne Motoring Centre*
8. *Gardners Books*
9. *GBS Insurance Services*
10. *Go Plastic Pallets*
11. *Herron Fisher*
12. *Hydro Hotel*
13. *Mayo Wynne Baxter*
14. *RYP Well-Being*
15. *Southern IT*
16. *Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club*
17. *Sportswise*
18. *St Wilfred’s Hospice*
19. *Switchplane*
20. *Tradesmith*
21. *UK Private Investigators*

The President thanked the members and guest for their forbearance during the power cut and as there was no other formal business the AGM closed at 6.45pm.

After the formal AGM closed the Chamber moved on to presentations and keynote speakers.

1. **Eastbourne Town Centre Development
Stephen Holt Deputy Leader of the Eastbourne Borough Council and
CEO of Your Eastbourne BID with Luke Johnson, Operations Manager

See slides attached**
2. **Recovery Plans for 2021/22 and the view from Westminster
Caroline Ansell MP**

It has been an extraordinary AGM with much optimism, and confidence. We all have that longing now to move forward, to rebuild and to reconnect. Even here this feels so very different.

The dynamism and the proactive work described by the BID team has a big place in my heart. The BID had its launch in Westminster in my first term of office, the Brexit term and now I am in my pandemic term! I am running again, so will it be third time lucky? I’m thinking alien invasion! There is a new energy, optimism, and everything to fight for in Eastbourne and the Chamber, the BID and partners across town are vital in this work.

There is real momentum and power behind this last year, securing support, investment and real partnership working. The synergy of people coming together.

During the pandemic I have banged on doors in Westminster relentlessly. I go armed with the insight and information provided by the Chamber demonstrating what a really tight experience it’s meant for businesses. Some have done well; others won’t make it. Some have been able to change the way they work and have thrived. Business in Eastbourne has an enormous capacity to adapt. That’s our DNA in Eastbourne.

I was at the old Mothercare today; the vaccination centre. They are so focused on the prize of completing vaccinations to protect the town and what we need to do in these next 28 days to get there. We need to step up, step out.

Just this week there has been a positive announcement, the Minister for Tourism, Nigel Huddleston, is expected to visit Eastbourne where 1 in 4 jobs in our town rely on capturing that staycation market. We anticipate a really buoyant season. Moving forward, the Eastbourne to Camber route is important. I am working very closely with the Environment Agency and looking for a £100-million investment to secure the next 100 years for our town. There are exciting plans and opportunities for regeneration projects that will put us on the map. Eastbourne is an incredible place to live and work!

Looking at new healthcare provision, millions of pounds is coming down the line. A new special school will be built alongside St Wilfrid’s, which is so desperately needed. We will have a purpose-built specialist facility in our town which had been delayed for some time but we hope to see this happening in September. We need to make sure that everyone in this town has every opportunity to do what they can!

Westminster this week also marks the 5th anniversary of the murder of Jo Cox. I remember where I was when I heard that dreadful news. I remember being on the terrace with work experience students from local schools. We saw a small boat approach us which contained Jo’s husband and children. They moored this tiny row boat which was filled with red roses. Such a powerful moment; so heart breaking.

Westminster is very much on my mind during this lockdown. The work of Westminster continues even if there is some distancing. I can’t wait until September and that full release!

Rest assured, I will work extremely hard for Eastbourne. When you’re the MP of the governing party and the bell goes for a vote, in that moment I know where every minister is going to be so I have 8 minutes to get to them all. The lobby is long, but I am ready. Even the Chancellor said I am relentless on behalf of Eastbourne.

Until September the work of Westminster continues in virtual ways, and it has been good to see the gradual easing there. The tourism sector thrives and I will be working alongside the Minister on the strategy in that department to make sure that we’re on the map. Sometimes we are an untold story about what a special place that is.

My most sincere thanks to you all for everything you’ve done as business people since the last AGM - to hold your people together whether you are employees, friends or family because that is how we have come through. In the coming weeks and months we will hear more stories of people reaching out, on how we are connecting as a community, because that is how we will go forward.

The Chief Executive then recapped on the part of the Presidents’ speech about the Levelling Up Fund, as some of that had been missed earlier:

The Government announced a ‘Levelling Up Fund’ recently which means we could get £20 million to invest in Eastbourne. There are lots of rules about the bid, but we had 45 different ideas from different people throughout the town.

I worked with Caroline, the steering group and the council to review all these ideas and suggestions. We had to make sure they complied with the government’s guidance and that they could be delivered within the very tight deadlines set. Some of the ideas were real blue sky thinking and some were more achievable in the time frame set so we honed them all down to 3 projects which had to work together in a coherent way.

We were looking for projects that would have tourism at the heart to drive more jobs into the town. The projects had to be visible and they had to improve the economy all year round, not just in summer. We wanted to see increases in skills and in stable jobs and we wanted to engage the whole community., so quite a task.

These are the three legs of the project which we believe deliver all our goals:

1. To turn Terminus Road into a ‘Las Ramblas’ style pedestrian walkway; similar to that famous street in Barcelona. We would have highly colourful awnings all the way down the street, from the Belgian Cafe to TJ Hughes.
The awnings will be 5m high; 7m wide and 170m long and will be highly colourful. The aim is to turn Eastbourne into an all-year-round destination, particularly in the winter and when it’s dark. The awnings will be designed by artists, so each one will be different. Also we will have green sustainable energy to keep the area lit and warm. There will be infrared heating powered by solar panels all along Victoria Mansions with helical wind turbines on top of Trinity Trees car park.
The aim is for this part of Terminus Road to become an outdoor, al fresco dining space and art gallery and it will be part of a continuous pedestrianised street from the station to the seafront.
2. The Towner was given to the people of Eastbourne in 1923, so we will soon be celebrating its 100th year anniversary. To mark the date in 2023 Towner will curate a series of artworks starting with a major installation on the seafront. You will be able to see it from Beachy Head where 900,000 cars visit each year. Unfortunately, many of those visitors don’t come into town and just drive back to where they came from but they will see this major work of art from the Downs and will be curious to come and investigate. To encourage them we will be providing better public transport links and e-scooters to hire and explore the town.
Towner will also be placing works of art across the town.
In Eastbourne we have 4 of the most disadvantaged areas in the country. Parts of Langney are in the bottom 4% competing with Blackburn, Birmingham and Moss Side for deprivation. We want to introduce art into those areas but we must engage those communities in creating that art, which brings me to the third leg of the plan.
3. Black Robin Farm, where we will create an environment where people from the community can learn real skills. For example, someone who left school at 16, falling between the cracks and feeling let down by society, can come to Black Robin Farm to work with artists like Grayson Perry or Conrad Shawcross to create something special. We will give them the opportunity to create dramatic works of art with the help of experts, so that they can see their creativity displayed across the town. Imagine, coming to this special place to beat seven bells out of some metal, learn welding and create something for everyone to see.
They will learn other skills too, including business administration; hospitality; retail, digital creativity as well as metal work and engineering.
These skills will drive hundreds of apprenticeships and will really reach into those disadvantaged areas.
Black Robin Farm will become a creative Mecca attracting visitors from all over the country, helping to drive our economy, all year roand.

This Bid has received lots of letters of support from various organisation including the Eastbourne Hospitality Association, Your Eastbourne BID, the East Sussex College Group, the Eastbourne Cultural Group, Towner, Stagecoach Bus Company and the Chamber of Commerce , but also the Eden Project who sent a fantastic letter of support and want to work with us on it.

And so I now ask Caroline to support our Bid and champion it in Westminster because this investment is so important to the town and to the community.

**Caroline Ansell’s reply** – Does this Levelling Up Fund do what it says on the tin? Does it reach the 1 in 5 in what are deemed income deprived areas? I am not convinced about community art; we have a very serious job to level up our town. Life expectancy changes as you drive across our town. I started this process with the highest expectations. Would this reach those for whom that shot at life is so critically important. There are aspects of the BID that I think are brilliant. I love the idea of giving tourism the ability to cross the seasons; but part of it is wanting; how do we extend our year and move beyond the summer seasonal dependency. When I’m standing in Victoria Place can I see it/feel it/hear it – Yes, I can. It can lead to all sorts of opportunities and experience; we need to bring in so very much more when you’re going to the shops. I could get very excited about that. But it’s the apprenticeships, the learning and the jobs which are most important. The BID has travelled a significant distance on that. Opportunities are more and varied, particularly around construction. Do I think we will have to really work? Yes. to really cement that link between the proposal at Black Robin Farm and the town centre that’s going to be mission critical to the success of this BID going forward.

Ways in which we are looking to achieve that are in art and also sustainable transport options. Our challenge is getting people from Black Robin into the town. We need to capture a whole new market. I want to see Eastbourne squarely identified as the gateway to the South Downs. I like the Black Robin proposal for achieving that too. Most particularly, I’m impressed by the quality of the partners who are involved. The burning priorities are the opportunities for levelling up and learning new skills.

The CEO then asked if there were any other questions. There were no further questions online or in the room.

**Stephen Holt** added: We’ve won a Welcome Back Fund of over £248,000 which is really important. The Chamber is working on search engine optimisation for business and an additional digital platform to attract visitors. The BID is working on Urban Art, the pop-up park and a whole host of other things. The Pop Up Park opens on Saturday and I hope everyone will join us when Caroline opens the park in Victoria Place at noon.

A question was asked online: what are the plans for Debenhams and TJ Hughes?

Stephen Holt responded and said that for the BID the two sites are absolutely fundamental to the success of the town. The levelling up fund will introduce pedestrianisation from M&S all the way to the seafront which will help leverage private investment in those buildings.

At present TJ Hughes is under consultation and the owners have suggested living units above shop units with a mixture of retail and leisure on the ground floor. Debenhams is more challenging because it is such a large unit. The owners have been talking to the council to work out what can be done. It will take time and will not change overnight.

We are installing urban art so it does not look like a derelict building. Both buildings are privately owned, but we are working closely with the council to turn them into something special.

**Councillor Robert Smart**, who leads the opposition in the Council, stated that the TJ Hughes building owners had tried to contact the Chamber without any response. The CEO asked for their details so she can contact them immediately as no email or letter has been received from them.

**James Holles** said he works with a consortium of investors in property. The one thing that is affecting the value of these properties is leaving them empty. Coming from an area in Brighton, they introduced help to buy schemes just for residents. Young people had to live in Brighton in order to qualify for the help to buy scheme which could be introduced in Eastbourne for Eastbourne people.

In 2017 the government said they would introduce more new homes to the market but the numbers built so far are still too low. If we can create nice affordable homes for local people, it will be re-funnelled back into our community. We need to look at ways to get a return on our investment and benefit the community.

The Chief Executive agreed it’s a good idea to help young people to buy, developing housing for the residents of Eastbourne. She will pass this on to the council.

There being no other questions the meeting closed at 7.26pm.

After the presentations, the Chief Executive thanked all the members and guests who had attended the AGM for their support and contribution and invited Chamber members and guests in the Yacht Club to continue to network and enjoy the refreshments provided.