

Minutes
Annual General Meeting at Sudbury House Hotel on 8th March 2010

Present	Nick Elwell, President; John Davis, Treasurer; Paul Brame, Morgan Cole; John Morton, Gel Marketing; Sarah Allen-Stevens, Wicklesham Commercial Properties; Margaret Barker, Faringdon Town Council, Clare Bowley, Deacon & Son, Denise Palmer, Presentations, Frank Pavy, Pavy Ltd,
Item 1	Apologies Christopher Marriott, Vivienne Checkley
Item 2	Welcome Nick welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Sudbury House for their generous hospitality.
Item 3	Minutes of Previous AGM The minutes of the 2009 Annual General Meeting were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.
Item 4	President's Report Nick presented his report to the meeting, a copy of which is attached. He highlighted several points including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • projects undertaken by Focus on Faringdon, • the co-ordination of road closures for events; • providing administrator for Faringdon Area Project; • the continuing monitoring of the Tesco proposal and support for the Retail group • thanks to Sarah Allen-Stevens for her work on the Employment Review • praise for Faringdon Town Council for the excellent work that they are doing with the Our Faringdon, Our Future working party, of which the Chamber are members. • A Christmas Ball has again been planned for 2010, this event will take place at Sudbury House Hotel on 3rd December, ticket prices will remain the same as in previous years and donations will be made to local charities; • the town Christmas Trees were again co-ordinated by Roger Watts on behalf of the Chamber and Nick thanked Roger for his continued work on this project.
Item 5	Treasurer's Report John presented the annual accounts, a copy is attached. He noted that the income and expenditure spans two financial years. He also highlighted that there is a small amount in the Supermarket Fund; this money was the result of donations toward the fight against Tesco. There is an overall increase in balances of approximately £1,000.00. The annual accounts were approved by members John thanked Vivienne Checkley of Bunting & Co for signing off the accounts again this year.

Item 6	<p>Election of Officers</p> <p>Last year's Officers were unanimously re-elected for a further term, Mr Paul Brame was proposed and duly elected to the post of Vice-President by Clare Bowley and seconded by Frank Pavy. Thanks were expressed for the Secretary.</p>
Item 7	<p>Speaker</p> <p>Mary Thomas of Concise Training gave a presentation about Social Networking for Businesses. She encouraged the use of Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to promote businesses. 60% of internet users aged 25 – 60 uses Facebook, LinkedIn is aimed at users who tend to be senior managers and those earning in excess of £50,000. Twitter could be used for regular day to day updates about businesses. Mary suggested that these online sites should be used to compliment, and not replace, face to face networking. The sites provide free advertising and Google love to pick up on social networking sites; they are good for businesses that don't have an online presence.</p> <p>Mary suggested that we should start developing a strategy within one month and by the second month she recommended joining up to the first site (she recommended LinkedIn) then from 6 months, start linking to other sites and at 12 months you should monitor and develop your offering. Mary stated that by 2014 20% of all business communication will be done through Social Networking sites.</p> <p>As an example of time taken – LinkedIn, once this is set up you would need about 5 minutes per week; Twitter, 4 – 5 tweets per day – Mary suggested setting up at least 2 tweets to go out automatically, 1 tweet that is personal and 2 re-tweets (forwarding on another person's tweets) this should take approximately 15 minutes per day. Facebook would be similar to Twitter. Mary said that larger companies would probably employ someone to post to Social Networking sites.</p>
Item 8	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Nick thanks Mary for her presentation and invited her to another meeting later in the year to follow up.</p> <p>It was suggested that Iain Nicholson of Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network should be invited to one of the monthly meetings</p> <p>Networking opportunities with other Chambers was discussed. The Wantage Chamber of Commerce have their Summer event on 9th June, Faringdon members will be invited to this.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 7:45 pm and members were invited to taste some Fair Trade wines provided once again by Den Boer Wines.</p>

What we have done?

Another busy year! We have been working hard to promote Faringdon and its businesses. The Chamber's Community Interest Company, Focus on Faringdon, has grown in size and is now well known: not only in Faringdon but also Wantage, Abingdon, Didcot and Newbury.

On behalf of The Chamber of Commerce, Focus on Faringdon has undertaken the following projects:

- Town Guides – the 2010 edition was published in December and we are just about to go to print with the Wantage 2010 guide. We have also been asked to consider guides for Abingdon, Didcot and Newbury.
- Focus on Faringdon website www.focusonfaringdon.co.uk now includes a well used, fully searchable, Business Directory with nearly 1000 business listed. The site contains a plethora of useful information and a youth section has been established.
- Working for the Joint Economic Forum to submit a bid to SEEDA for the Action Plan projects.

French Markets

The Chamber of Commerce organised two successful French Markets in 2009. The March market was well supported as always and although the September market was cancelled Marche de France came to join in with Festive Faringdon in November. This year's French Markets will be on 28th March and on November 27th for Festive Faringdon. We are also hoping that they will come in July.

Road Closures for events

The Chamber of Commerce has co-ordinated road closures for all (known!) town events this year following discussion with local groups, including the Retail Group and the Arts Festival organisers. The Town Council were provided with maps, dates, times, etc. and the road closures effected at a fraction of the cost of making an application for each event.

Faringdon Area Project

The Chamber of Commerce has supported Faringdon Area Project with an administrator – who has continued to provide ongoing administration support to Daphne Saunders: the current chairman.

Jane worked with the South East Rural Towns Partnership and Action for Market Towns to host the South East Market Towns Awards for 2009 at Sudbury House. Faringdon's entry, ECOWEEK won this regional event and went on to win the National Finals in Melton Mowbray. Faringdon has been selected to host the regional awards ceremony for 2010 in July (The week of the Faringdon Arts Festival)...

Faringdon Area Projects Health & Social Care Group has gone from strength to strength and now the PCT and other healthcare organisations are asking the group to comment on various initiatives. This group has organised a monthly Housing Benefit surgery that, following a slow start, is now well used.

Faringdon Town Council

The Chamber of Commerce has continued to work with the Town Council and has been involved in providing a response to the Local Development Framework – Preferred Options.

There is normally a Town Council representative at Chamber meetings and we shall continue to encourage the development of mutual links.

The Retail Group

The Chamber of Commerce has supported the Retail Group wherever possible; it is becoming increasingly difficult to engage with this group which is now almost dormant. (This surprises us in view of the on-going Tesco's & Shopping debate.)

The Chamber continues to monitor the Tesco's proposed development and has invited representatives of Tesco to discuss their proposals with the Retail Group. An alternative proposal suggesting the development of a new store on the site of the Portway (adjacent to the current car park) has been submitted.

Employment Review

This project has been carried out by Sarah Allen-Stevens on behalf of the Chamber. This review was started as the Chamber's response to the Vale of White Horse District Council's Local Development Framework – Preferred Options. Sarah has now developed and updated the report and it now forms part of the Town Council's Our Faringdon, Our Future response document

The Faringdon Breakfast Club

The Chamber has promoted the Business Breakfast Club, now run by Paul Brame. Members have been attending the monthly meetings. The Business Breakfast Club continues to increase its membership. It has now moved from Brunel House to Sudbury House – where a full English breakfast is available on the first Monday of every month.

The Faringdon Business Lunch

This monthly networking event is held on the last Friday of the month. It is an opportunity for informal networking with business people from around Faringdon. The venue and cost vary from £6.00 for a ploughman's lunch at The Portwell Cellar to £24.00 at the Market Restaurant for a Christmas celebration. Dates are published in the events diary on the Focus on Faringdon website.

The Christmas Ball.

The Ball was a huge success, 120 people attended this black tie event: again held at Sudbury House Hotel in December. Pre-dinner drinks were served in the bar and during the gourmet dinner we heard from pianist Reg Eyles There was dancing to local band, Life & Soul. From the proceeds we were able to present £500.00 to the Faringdon Family Centre and make a donation on Reg's behalf to the British Heart Foundation.

We have again booked Sudbury House for a Christmas Ball on Friday 3rd December this year. The ticket price will be unaltered at £50.00 per ticket. You can now reserve your tickets through the Chamber Secretary

14 Market Place Faringdon Oxfordshire SN7 7HP
Contact Jane Haynes: 01367 241162 Jane.haynes@bordengate.com

Faringdon Community College

Business Awards at Faringdon Community College were presented by Jane Haynes at the annual Presentation evening in December a £50 award was made to Conor Olphert who was nominated by the Business Studies teachers for the excellent progress he has made in Business Studies lessons.

And some other things....

Christmas Trees – Once again Roger Watts arranged Christmas Trees for all of the businesses and shops in the centre of town. He has done this for many years now and the Chamber would like to thank him for his continued hard work

Represented Faringdon businesses at various meetings with the VWHDC that included, Tourism Monitoring meetings, Business Rates consultations, OTCN conference

Built links with the Fairford & Lechlade Business Club and attended their Summer event.

We have written to the Vale (with some success) on behalf of members who seemed to be suffering with slow response times from the planning department.

The Chamber of Commerce was represented at the Remembrance Sunday service by Nick who laid a wreath at the War Memorial on behalf of the Chamber.

Speakers at meetings:

Laura Szuca of Fox FM on changing to Heart FM
Simon Tiensa of Budgens on his development plans for the Faringdon store
Ed Vaizey MP
Philip Wootton of Business Link
Fiona McClure of Critchleys HR

And what do we propose to do this year?

The Faringdon Chamber of Commerce is here for the benefit of business, generally. But businesses work within a community and we therefore wish to continue to forge closer links with other groups such as

- Retail Group – Continue to support the group and monitor the Tesco proposal
- The Breakfast Club – promotion of this local networking group
- The Town Council - in particular as part of the Our Faringdon, Our Future working party
- The Oxfordshire Town Chamber Network – we have good links with this group and many of our events and campaigns have been publicised through them.
- Faringdon Association of Residents
- Faringdon Area Project
- Faringdon Arts Festival with a tint of Lord Berners this year and re-introducing the Sealed Knot in 2011
- Develop a low cost “disaster recovery scheme” for members

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- Continue with the planned feasibility study for a new conference/performance centre
- Further develop the alternative plans for the development of the retail offering in Faringdon

We have some representation on committees such as, the Joint Economic Forum (Nick Elwell) the Traffic Advisory Group (John Davis) the Christmas Lights Committee (John Morton), etc, etc...

I hope that by working more closely with the other groups we might avoid some duplication of effort whilst achieving mutually ambitious targets more quickly.

We are keen to continue developing the Faringdon Chamber of Commerce so that it is

- the Central Point for business development in Faringdon and Oxfordshire
- a Support Point for those who wish to organise events
- the Liaison Point with the Oxford Chamber Network
- a Networking Forum (although I am keen to promote membership of the Faringdon Chamber of Commerce as an organisation that you contribute to for the benefit of the other members: it remains apparent that those who contribute most to membership benefit most from membership.
- an Access Point for the collation of new regulations & legislation
- an Access Point for the provision of business orientated advice and assistance

Can the Chamber of Commerce Help You?

Monthly Meetings:

The monthly meetings are now run on an “open forum” basis where all are welcome. Members who attend are invited to have their say on all Chamber business and there is usually an invited speaker and a glass of wine!

General business related questions from members are discussed and, when appropriate, we will bring in someone (or two) for that meeting. Topics might, for example, include

- Legal Issues
- Tax Issues
- VAT issues
- Marketing Issues
- Sales Development
- Insurance Issues
- Export Issues
- Import &/or letters of credit issues
- Building or Planning Issues

So What do YOU get for YOUR money

- Access to Information
- Discounted rates for advertising on www.Faringdon.org: www.VisitVale.com
www.FocusonFaringdon.co.uk, and in the Faringdon Town Guide and Tourism Guide
- A chance to "network" (Breakfast clubs cost some £10.00 per event per person)
- An opportunity to help others and the Faringdon Community in general
- An opportunity to magnify your "single" voice to the authorities on business matters of concern. (This works both locally and on a wider basis as we are linked to the Oxfordshire Chamber Network)
- And also, It's an opportunity to stand in the rain and sell mulled wine: to collect money in a bucket whilst watching grown men from the Sealed Knot trying to spear each other

and what do YOU have to do to be a member

Like any club, membership is about giving as well as receiving. I am quite sure that the more YOU put into the Faringdon Chamber of Commerce the more YOU will see come out. The Faringdon Chamber of Commerce can be a catalyst to help you achieve your ideas, your wishes, and your plans. But it is a reactive organisation that needs YOUR input before it can react.

Our new members have all immediately enhanced their businesses as the direct result of joining. Ask them for details