

Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce Policy and Membership Action Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 26th September 2019 at 8:30am at the Chamber Office

Present

Matt Travis – Enzygo (Chair)

Andrew Denniff - Chamber of Commerce

Mark Smith – Chamber of Commerce

Sophia Ali – Minx Consulting

Tim O' Connell – RIDO

Clive Watkinson – JC Snell Ltd

Matthew Ridsdale – Cannon PR

Apologies

Lisa Pogson – Airmaster / Chamber President

Mike Lawrence - Mike Lawrence Holistic Therapies

Carol Sheffield – Signs Express

Susan Crowther – Pink-Pink International Ltd

Ram Singh – Amity International Ltd

Chris Armitage – Welfare Call Ltd

Paula Foreman – Finance for Enterprise

Ian Chapman – I C Health & Safety Ltd

Gareth Owen – QFM Group Ltd

Sharon Fudge - JWJ Finance

Shane Young – Chamber of Commerce

1. Welcome & introductions

Matt Travis (MT) as Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from the above members. It was noted Gareth Owen is due to retire in November and therefore wishes to come off the group membership list.

3. Purpose / terms of reference

The existing terms of reference (written a couple of years ago) were shared with the meeting. Andrew Denniff (AD) noted that they give a level of flexibility in terms of the focus for the group. A key aim is to consider:

- how we can engage more of the circa 1200 Chamber members in getting involved with the Chamber.
- How do we best represent our members within the SCR?

AD recognised that members give their time on a voluntary basis in order to participate in the range of working groups.

MT queried whether skills should come under the remit of this group, especially if the separate skills working group has stalled.

ACTION: MT to discuss with AD

Discussion took place regarding how to engage more members in policy discussions including the following points:

- Matthew Ridsdale (MR) asked if the Chamber still produces a regular members survey to help gather views? AD replied yes this is done annually and elicits around a 10% response rate. Mark Smith (MS) added that some members indicated in the last survey that they would be interested in getting involved with several of the working groups and as result they are now invited to attend them.
- Sophia Ali asked wouldn't members get together if there was an issue? Clive Watkinson said not necessarily as not everyone can always give the time to get things done.
- SA asked if there could be barriers for members getting involved in the working groups associated with a lack of experience and confidence of attending meetings (especially those new in business); or the timing of the meeting i.e. 8:30am start could be a challenge for parents in order to make them.
- CW acknowledged that business culture has changed in recent years compared to when a lot of business use to be conducted on the golf course or over working lunches. He also thinks that the personality of the business owner/leader is key as to whether they see and understand the value of their business being active and engaged in Chamber issues or not.
- AD and CW both made the points that through the Chamber working groups, members can access senior officials in order to influence and lobby on key issues that they would otherwise often find it difficult to access.

4. Chamber update

- AD referred to the Bank of England breakfast briefing meeting that is taking place tomorrow at Tankersley Manor with a keynote speaker who is a member of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- AD and Vice President of the Chamber Matt Stevens-Stephens are due to meet with James Muir the Chair of the SCR Local Enterprise Partnership.

5. Current policy issues

A discussion took place on some of the current key policy issues affecting the businesses of members, including:

- Transport issues
- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Mental health and wellbeing and 'presenteeism'
- Lack of service stations that HGV drivers can access in order to have their breaks
- Issues relating to the SCR economic plan
- SCR provision and support is very Sheffield centric and how can there be a more 'place based' approach
- How can members access SCR growth fund monies – 82% of the growth fund budget has been allocated to Sheffield based businesses.

ACTION: MS invite David Grimes of SCR to attend the next meeting to discuss the growth fund.

6. Campaign document

AD referred to the draft 6-page campaign document that he will circulate to the group. Its purpose is to highlight the three key policy areas that the Chamber should be working to address. He asked for the group to feedback comments and ideas and he and MS would then work up the final document to be discussed at the next Rep Council meeting.

ACTION: AD to circulate document / ALL feed in comments to AD and MS

7. Issues for Rep Council

- AD explained new representatives were being sought from the Chamber membership to join the Rep Council.
- AD updated that from Rep Council, there are currently 2 nominations to appoint members to the Board of Directors: Ben McFeeley and Clive Watkinson.
- AD updated that Rep Council members will shortly vote on a preference from 3 candidates standing to be the Chamber Vice President. Candidates include: Matt Travis, Anne Wilson and Joda Allen.
- The next Rep Council meeting will take place on 21 October at 5pm at The Holiday Inn in Dodworth, Barnsley.

8. A.O.B.

- MS asked if there were any plans to hold an MPs Forum/Roundtable discussion soon? AD replied that the Chamber usually run two a year, one in Barnsley and one in Rotherham. However, because of all the current uncertainty, this is put on hold and will be reviewed later in the year/next year.
- CW asked if the membership staff team could identify potential policy issues that members are having challenges with and then feed them into the working groups as items for discussion. MS reported that the membership team had referred several new and existing members to himself who were interested in getting involved in several of the working groups, which MS has invited them to.

ACTION: AD and MS to discuss with Shane Young, Membership Manager.

9. Date of next meeting

- It was agreed MS would create a doodle poll for members to indicate their availability to hold the next meeting in week commencing 24th November 2019 which would be after the AGM (due on 21st November).

ACTION: MS to create / ALL to respond