

Crewkerne Chamber of Commerce
Committee Meeting 7th June 2007, Bilby's Café
Minutes by Shirley Marsland

Attending

Marcus Barrett (Chair)	Enterprise House
Ric Allen	Royal Oak
Malcolm Broadhurst	Crewkerne PO
Tris Pinkney	Bilbys
Mike Banks	SMS Ltd
Neil Mackintosh	Treasurer
Eileen Mills	Prelude Sports
Pamela Pickford	Ninis
Veronica Venables	Spritz

Meeting Opened 6pm

Marcus thanked Tris, Jane & staff for their hospitality in hosting the meeting at Bilby's Café.

1) Apologies

ii) Received from Anton Jordi & Hilary Leamon; Keith Knight has resigned due to work commitments and leaves the committee with our thanks and good wishes.

2) Committee Matters

a) Appointment of New Committee Members

i) Mike Banks of SMS Ltd was welcomed. Mike is a leading exporter with many years experience of precision engineering and who led a management buy-out of the mechanical seals business of Sterlings.

ii) Pamela Pickford of Nini's Gift Shop (who joined the meeting later) was also welcomed. Pamela has a wealth of experience ranging from working at Westland and NGL and is now one of Crewkerne's leading retailers.

iii) On a show of hands, both Mike Banks and Pamela Pickford were voted on to the Chamber Committee.

b) Apportionment of Portfolios

Marcus outlined that these roles give a tight initial team focus and to keep thinking ahead as an organisation in areas crucial to business success in and around Crewkerne: they mean that committee members act as 'eyes and ears' for things the Chamber should act on

Shirley Marsland – Secretariat & link with Yeovil Chamber

Neil Mackintosh – Treasurer & financial affairs

Anton Jordi – Tourism / accommodation; & Crewkerne 'internationally'

Rick Allen – Licenced trade

Hilary Leamon – Link with Town Council on business-related issues

Malcolm Brocklehurst – Post Office & related government information

Eileen Mills – Town events / festivities; & Community Safety Group

Veronica Venables – Service sector

Pam Pickford – Retail & town centre issues

Mike Banks – Engineering & export

Marcus Barrett – Chairman; legal aspects; New business; ABCD

3) i) Themes of New Leadership

Marcus introduced three key themes to guide the new leadership:

- **Crewkerne in Business** – positive presentation of the town as a good place to do business
- **Membership:** Need to focus on what members want and to identify the small and big ideas.
- **Innovation:** the Chamber will make effective use of its web page, e-mail databases and consider a wide range of new & different activities

These key themes lead into specific targets:

ii) Chamber Target areas for action in the 6-months to December 2007

- a) **Membership:** Target to increase membership by 25% in the next 6 months by recruiting at least 8 new members. There are a number of new businesses in town that can be approached including the Aquatic shop, Therapy Centre, Barbers, Barons, Mrs B's, and MARCUS is making contact with the industrial estate and has interest expressed by Footprintz. It was suggested that the businesses on the industrial estate could be asked to set up a sub group to discuss issues of interest to them which would report back to the Chamber. It was agreed that a membership certificate and possibly a window sticker would be useful. All members requested to approach other local business contacts.

Action points:

- *Shirley Compile up-to-date membership list for 2007*
- *Marcus to draft certificate/window sticker*
- *Eileen to provide quote for double-sided window stickers*
- *Variety of themed talks / varied times of meeting, to be inclusive*

- b) **Security:** still seems to be a significant issue in the town, especially with retailers. The Community Safety Group has been looking at lighting, CCTV and the possibility of setting up a new Shopwatch scheme. It was reported that the Chard Shopwatch had been more successful because they were using walkie-talkies and not relying on phone-arounds which had been a problem in Crewkerne. It was agreed that further information be sought on the funding of the Chard scheme, and that the Chamber would follow up issues with the CSG.

Action points:

- *Marcus to get further info about funding of Chard Shopwatch*
- *Committee to ask around businesses – suggestions on security?*

- c) **Pre-emptive action:** Chamber to focus on getting ideas for projects to offset disruption from Waitrose build. Previous ideas put forward included asking Waitrose to pay for shoppers parking and/or for taking a monthly page in the Western Gazette to report on progress which could include free ads for local businesses, and improving the signage from the store into the town. It was agreed that improved signage was also required for the George Centre, car parks etc

Action point:

- *Marcus to follow-up his initial contact with Waitrose,*
- *Shirley to provide Marcus with copy of previous letter to SSDC re car park signage*

- d) **Innovation:** Marcus has been working with ABCD group to develop a plan for promoting business in Crewkerne (CALIBRE) which includes setting up email list for the regular dissemination of news and info. The minutes of Chamber meetings will also be included on www.crewkernetown.co.uk/commerce. It was agreed that a monthly meeting programme be set up alternating the Chamber Committee with open meetings with guest speakers. The timing of the meetings also to be varied between breakfast/lunch/evening.

Action point: *Marcus to set up meeting programme; all mtgs to be 1hr max henceforth*

Hanging Baskets: It was suggested that cash or garden centre tokens be given as prizes to encourage hanging baskets. It was felt that businesses were happy to receive a cup but that offering other, new prizes might encourage more baskets. It was agreed that the Chamber should investigate finding a supplier and/or subsidising the costs of providing hanging baskets in 2008. The key problem of watering baskets was the main challenge. It was also suggested that businesses be encouraged to 'adopt' a public space to improve the quality of planting on the traffic islands etc.

Action point: *Marcus to investigate responsibility for planting public areas*

4) Focus Further Ahead

- a) **Business Directory:** Marcus proposed that local designers/printers are used to re-design the Directory and that it be re-issued next year, with a project manager being employed to carry out the work on a part-stake basis

Action point:

Marcus seeking quotations from local printers

Marcus to propose project-managed Directory linking with Online Directory

Marcus to contact Alliance & Leicester who run small business banking offer

- b) **External Links:** Marcus reported that he had set up links with Ilminster and Yeovil Chambers and that he was making contact with Somerset and Taunton Chambers. He further proposed setting up a twinning link with a Chamber in China in order to generate interest and develop Chamber's outward perspectives.

5) AOB

i) Correspondence

Letters had been received from the following:

- a. **Friends of Crewkerne Hospital** – thanks for donation
- b. **Lighting up Committee** – putting forward new proposals for Xmas lights and event
- c. **Traffic Management Survey** – no significant developments
- d. **Community Safety Group** - action plan (we must monitor carefully)

ii) Bonsoir Building re-development

It was reported that there is now interest from other parties looking to develop the site for employment use. The residential use planning application was being discussed at the Area West Planning meeting at Chard Town Hall on 20th June at 7pm. Members were urged to attend the meeting to support the Chamber position in favour of using this opportunity for a quality commercial space

Date of meeting : to be confirmed – pls see www.CrewkerneTown.co.uk/commerce

Meeting Closed 6:55pm