

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

12<sup>th</sup> May 2016  
At 6.30pm at  
Cannizaro, Hotel du Vin, Wimbledon Common

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Andrew Wakefield, Chair of Merton Chamber of Commerce opened the meeting by welcoming the guests to the Annual General Meeting and thanked Cannizaro, Hotel du Vin for their hospitality.

**Apologies** were received from Sara Williams and Cllr Oonagh Moulton from Merton Council, Polka Theatre, Morrisons Solicitors, Vanessa Birley Florals, Equicise, Wimbledon Village Stables, Eligo Recruitment, Royal Medical Benevolent Fund and Tennison Property.

- **To receive the Chair's report.**
  - Merton Chamber has seen a three year period of stability in relation to long term service contracts which we have delivered on behalf of the London Borough of Merton, regional and national government.
  - In readiness for our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017 the team at Merton Chamber, in partnership with the Board of Directors, has spent the last six months doing market research, and as a result plan to launch a New Face of Membership. As a social enterprise we are not about making a profit, but we must be robust about our finances and ensure we operate efficiently and effectively, following the advice we would give to any small business. This will be explained by Diana Sterck, CEO of Merton Chamber later in the evening's proceedings.
  - Looking back at the past year Andrew paid tribute to our members; our stakeholders and the community at large including charities, the arts, community groups as well as thanking businesses who have sponsored the Merton Best Business Awards. Andrew also thanked the London Borough of Merton for their support of Merton Chamber's work, and the time and effort they put in to make Merton a business friendly borough. Thanks was also given to the leader of Merton Council Cllr Stephen Alambritis.
  - Andrew thanked the Directors and the Finance Committee who have this year taken on additional responsibilities, as well as thanking them for their expertise and support over the last year.
  - Finally, he thanked the staff team and colleagues at Love Wimbledon and for the strong partnership working.

Andrew then passed to Diana to review the achievements of the last year.



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Diana Sterck, CEO of Merton Chamber took the audience through the highlights of the last year, which were set out in the attendees' packs:

- Membership – this is now at 600 members, with 102 new members welcomed in the last year. We have saved members 33% on training workshops and events through member discounts. There were 21 networking events over the year, with 775 members attending these, and over 1140 guests in totals. 180 members attended 21 training workshops, with 230 attendees in total.
- Merton Business Support Serviced, funded by the London Borough of Merton, supported 800 local businesses and start ups over the last year, creating 200 jobs. We helped 160 new Merton businesses start-up, and delivered over 1000 hours of one to one business advice. Local businesses also received support in raising over £750,000 in finance.
- The Take One programme was funded by Merton Council and JobCentre Plus and helped 60 local residents into work. 100 Merton Businesses were championed to source apprenticeships, work placements, internships and jobs.
- The Generator Business Centre in Mitcham has had an occupancy rate of 98%, with over 100 employees (23 units) based at the centre.
- The Healthy Workplace Programme has worked with 100 businesses locally, and has provided an innovative opportunity to approach businesses.

The formal AGM proceeding then followed:

- **To approve any matters arising from the minutes of the AGM held in 2015 and to address any matters arising from these Minutes.** Formal apologies (see above) were noted, and the Minutes of the last AGM held on 14 May 2015 were accepted as an accurate record of proceedings and were unanimously received. Proposed by: Steve Farrow (Training and Recruitment Partnership) and seconded by Victoria Nicol (Red Brick Creative Ltd).
- **To receive and adopt the accounts of the Company for the year ended June 2015 together with the reports thereon of the auditors of the Company.** The accounts had been approved by our Finance Committee, as audited 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. The accounts were unanimously approved.

Diana Sterck took the attendees through the highlights of the accounts:

- Turnover topped £1 million for the first time
- Surplus was £670,000
- Income breakdown was approximately:
  - 20% The Generator Business Centre – managed workspace
  - 10% Membership, Events and Workshops



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- 70% Managed service delivery (Newham contract/Merton Business Support Service/ Love Wimbledon/ASSP/Merton Council and Greening)
  
- **To appoint auditors of the Company.** The Chair recommended that the auditors, Hartley Fowler LLP, were appointed for another year and this was unanimously approved. The Chair thanked Hartley Fowler for their support and their work on the Finance Committee.
  
- **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. Mike Smith, McDonalds, resigned earlier in the year, as he no longer had a restaurant in the borough, but all other Board members were happy to stand for another year. Merton Chamber were now in the process of identifying new directors.

The formal proceedings of the AGM were then concluded, with no further formal motions. Andrew concluded with thanks to Diana Sterck as CEO of Merton Chamber, the team and to the Directors for their support.

### **The Changing Face of Membership**

Diana Sterck explained to the audience the background to the new phase for the business.

The proposed changes to the Chambers Membership model evolved through research undertaken with our members, and then compared with other membership bodies.

Research had been undertaken with both our members and non-members through an online survey. 64 businesses completed the survey; plus there were also 19 in depth face to face interviews.

Key Messages from the results were:

- Help raise your business profile
- Facilitate introductions to the right people for your business
- Receive member discounts for networking events and workshops
- Support you with marketing – through off line and online services
- Support you with mentoring and coaching

This was demonstrated through a video our story through our members, and how the Chambers' varied services have supported their business growth.



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Diana thanked Paul Tanner Photography and member of staff Natalie Rickman for compiling and editing the video, and to those members who took part in the video, and also for Merton Council's financial support to facilitate the growth in those businesses featured through the Merton Business Support Service.

Our new membership proposals build on the messages in the video:

- Continuing being very proactive and accountable to our members
- Simplifying our offer and the way we organise it
- Making us fit for purpose and ahead of the game in relation to other Chambers of Commerce

The new membership model would be based on two packages of support – Standard and Premier, with concession given to those smaller, start up businesses. We would be removing the membership joining fee and membership would be based on these packages rather than based on employee size.

In addition, with 50% of survey respondents saying that they would be interested in sponsorship, we will be offering negotiated packages for premier members.

Andrew Wakefield then asked members if they had any comments on this proposal. Feedback from the audience on the pricing model of Standard Members = £150+vat for non-vat registered businesses; £250+vat for vat-registered businesses and Premier Membership at £750+vat, was that we were underselling ourselves and Standard Membership should be at least £350+vat.

There were no objections to the new Membership Package.

The audience was thanked for joining Merton Chamber of Commerce at the AGM and Diana and the Chamber team then invited guests to network in the Ruinart Room, Orangerie and Terrace at Cannizaro House Hotel.



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