

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**28<sup>th</sup> June 2023**  
**At 6.45pm**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

#### **Welcome**

Diana Sterck, C.E.O of Merton Chamber, welcomed guests to the 30th AGM and Summer BBQ at the lovely setting of Hotel Du Vin, Cannizaro House and congratulated everyone on their colourful attire.

Diana introduced Sarah Austin, Chair of the board of Directors, and her colleague, Charlotta Harbour, New Business Development Manager.

Sarah expressed her pleasure in hosting her second AGM for Merton Chamber and welcomed our members and guests, making special mention to the new Mayor of Merton, Cllr Gill Manley, The Leader of the Council Cllr Ross Garrod sent his apologies, but we are pleased to welcome two of his Cabinet members, Councillors Eleanor Stringer, and Natasha Irons. We also welcome Cllr Tony Reiss representing the Liberal Democrats. We also welcomed Leonie Cooper, London Assembly member for Merton and Wandsworth.

Sarah confirmed that the meeting, which required a set number of members present, was quorate.

### **FORMAL AGM**

#### **Chair's Report**

This AGM refers to the financial year ending June 2022. Looking back to 2021, two years ago, the country was starting to recover from the major impact of Covid 19, and then the Cost of Living and energy crisis started to hit us all. This created increasingly challenging and complex trading conditions for our members. As the Chamber we responded by getting back to being there to lobby on key business issues, such as the energy crisis, holding in person events and supporting our members through new services such as:

The Kickstart scheme where we supported 135 young people into work, with 60% going on to permanent employment.

Peer Networks where we worked in partnership with Business Clan to support 22 businesses with leadership development.

We also held a very successful Merton Best Business Awards in 2021 and we continue to work in collaboration with Merton Connected to promote Merton Giving in supporting local charities. £850,000 has been distributed to local charities over a 4-year period.

We are very pleased to have a dynamic membership, with 620 members and strong links with our 3 local Business Improve Districts (BID) - Love Wimbledon, South Wimbledon Business Area, and Willow Lane Industrial Area.

We have held several Masterclass events in partnership with Love Wimbledon and Merton Council offering support and expertise to our members during these challenging times.

Sarah then passed over to Charlotta and Diana to speak about our current and future activities.

### **Charlotta – Looking back/looking forward**

It is now a year since I joined the Chamber and I know so many of you now. I have been busy over the last year looking at best marketing and communications to make our communications interesting and of value. We aim to pass on to you timely updates from the council and government information.

She explained that she had started with changing the logo, to make it more representative of who we are and what we do.

We welcomed 15 new members since September.

We have provided better and timely updates and better engagement. We have agreed more sponsorship to help us put on in person events, as there are definite benefits to meeting people face to face.

Masterclasses – We have worked with Love Wimbledon with funding from Merton Council which has enabled us to engage quality speakers. Our Wellbeing Masterclass attracted new members and was recorded on a podcast which our members can find in the Resources section on our website. The next Masterclass is all about sustainability and will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> September as a breakfast meeting at the All England Lawn Tennis Club.

Website - Our website was upgraded by Ace Web Studio and has improved user experience which we will continue to improve. There is now a member's directory and a trusted resource section. There is a big update next week – you will be able to expand your content and put on your own business descriptions yourselves, and there will be a new members area. You will be sent log in details, instructions, and access codes shortly. The website will also tell you when your membership is due for renewal. There is a member's only area where you can post business to business offers. You will also find tutorials and business to business advice.

Sponsorship Opportunities – we offer you the opportunity to sponsor the following events.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

Sustainability MC

Women in Business

Digital Evolution

Young Chamber

Wimbledon Rounders (led by Hartley Fowler) – Merton Chamber and Love Wimbledon teamed up and played to raise funds for charity.

**Diana continued with a further update:**

Merton Best Business Awards - run by Sophie Esene, celebrates the amazing businesses we have in the borough and their achievements. Winning businesses have told us they are proud to have won and how it has helped them improve their profile and credibility. 143 businesses applied last year and 75 made it to the finals.

This year we have 17 sponsors and partners for the 2023 awards, without whom the awards would not run.

The awards will be held on Thursday 5th October and in a new venue this year - AFC Wimbledon. We are very pleased to have them as our event partner and know we can run an awards evening that is even bigger and better than previous years. Applications for this year's awards are open now and will close on Friday 14 July.

Merton Giving – Jenny O'Neill is our lead on this. This is a collaboration with Merton Connected, and Diana welcomed the new CEO, Tony Malloy, to the AGM.

Since 2020, Merton Giving has surpassed £1million in grant funding to local charities and I acknowledge the business donors and your fundraising efforts that have contributed to this significant milestone. Funding has had a real impact on our community and improved lives by touching 10% of Merton's more vulnerable residents. Examples of those supported are domestic abuse victims, mental health support for young people alongside initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation and promote social connection.

Looking ahead – I am delighted to announce Merton Giving has secured around £400,000 of further funding to develop our work and increase its reach.

Thank you to our key supporters including Wimbledon Foundation and Merton Council. Also, thanks to Merton Giving's Steering Committee, which includes members from the business community, and thanks also to the members of the grant funding panel who represent a key number of stakeholders in the borough and who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the decision-making process.

## **Formal AGM**

**Apologies** were noted. There were 8 in total.

- **Sally Hodgson** – Adept/Director
- **Naomi Martin** - Commonsense Community Development Trust/Director
- **MP Stephen Hammond**
- **MP Siobhain McDonagh**
- **Gustavo Mofati** – Barclays Bank
- **Nick Samuel** – Samuel Estates/Director
- **Lucy Owen** – London Borough of Merton
- **Wendy Patterson** – WSM Advisors

## **Approval of the 2021 Minutes**

**Proposer: David Dodds**

**Seconded by: Eleanor Merrick**

These were accepted as an accurate record of proceedings and were unanimously received. There were no actions required.

## **Financial Report**

This covers our finance report from July 2021 to June 2022, accounts, a motion from our directors to increase membership subs and reappointment of accountants.

Our finances are overseen by a Finance Committee that meets 6 times a year and is Chaired by Director Nick Frank, and Sarah, as Chair of the Board, also attends. Also on the Committee is Jonathan Askew from Hartley Fowler - our accountants, Gustavo Mofati from Barclays Bank, Bernadette Cook, our Finance Manager and Diana CEO.

Our turnover was £325,724 – up from £194,456 in the previous year when we had restricted trading because of Covid.

Our income is made up of membership subscriptions, sponsorship, income from events and what we call managed contracts. This is where we are awarded funding from the Government and other funding bodies for services such as Kickstart, Peer Networks and Merton Giving.

Finally, we ended the year with a small surplus of £15,274 and a cash reserves position of £44,237.

**Proposer: Charles Hyton-Potts**

**Seconded: Paul Ahearn**

These were accepted as an accurate record of proceedings and were unanimously received by a vote of hands.

### **Membership Subs**

The Board reviewed our position and agreed to increase the membership subscriptions from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 as follows. We believe we are providing a great value membership and, as you have heard from Charlotta, more benefits to come. So, we are proposing an increase of an average of up to 10% with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July.

	Current price		After increase
Classic not vat registered	163		180
Classic vat registered	376		395
Premier	803		880

**Proposer: Slawek Szczepanski**

**Secunder: Lynsey Coleman**

These were accepted as an accurate record of proceedings and were unanimously received by a vote of hands.

### **To reappoint our Accountants**

Hartley Fowler have been our accountants for over 18 years, and we are very thankful for the support they give us and for producing our annual accounts. We recommend that they are reappointed.

Proposer: Janet Burrows

Seconded by: Shennette May

### **To re-appoint existing members of the Board of Directors**

In April 2022 our previous Chair, John Merriman, stepped down and Sarah Austin was elected as the new Chair at our last AGM along with Sally Hodgson. We have one resignation during the current year, Naomi Martin – representing a community development trust and Mitcham and I'd like to pass my thanks and those of the Directors for her support as a director for 10 years.

The directors up for re-appointment are: -

Sarah Austin – Chair – representing the business community.

Janet Borrow – representing the self-employed and legal profession and the Wimbledon Chase area.

Nick Frank – representing a large benevolent fund based in Wimbledon.

Charlie Hylton Potts – representing the legal profession and based in Wimbledon Village

Delia Porter – representing the small business community and Raynes park.  
Nick Samuel – representing the business community and based Merton Abbey Mills  
Slawek Szczepanski – representing the East European business community and based in Mitcham.  
Shernette May – representing entrepreneurs in the community sector and based in Mitcham.  
Eleanor Merrick – representing the education sector.  
Sally Hodgson, representing the large business community.

We also have a co-opted member of the Board from LB Merton – James McGinlay. James has had to take some time off and we look forward to welcoming him back.

**Proposer: Lynsey Coleman**  
**Secunder: Tracy Francis.**

These were accepted as an accurate record of proceedings and were unanimously received by a vote of hands.

**The formal proceedings of the AGM were then concluded, with no further formal motions.**

**Thank you from Diana.**

To you – our members, including the massively important working relationship we have with Merton Council

To our business award and event sponsors, we couldn't do most of what we do without you.

To our Chair and Directors for giving their time freely to support our governance and development

To Roehampton University for sponsoring the AGM premier drinks reception

and to Spencer and his team at Cannizaro for hosting us in this beautiful space.

To Samuel Estates – for organizing the best attire competition.

And finally

To my team – a great team! They are all here tonight.

### **A few final words from Sarah**

We've outlined to you our bold ambitions for the year ahead and as Chair, I believe we have a positive future. The macro picture is tough, but we are excited about our various initiatives, our collaborations, including Masterclasses, a bigger and better Merton Best Business Awards and Merton Giving – so I want this to be a Chamber you want to be part of and feel proud to be a member of.