

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

26th June 2024 at 6.45pm

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

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Welcome

The AGM started with slides of testimonials from our members explaining how being members of Merton Chamber it has helped them in their businesses.

Charlotta Harbour, C.E.O of Merton Chamber, welcomed guests to the 31st AGM officially kicking off summer tonight at the Hotel Du Vin, Cannizaro House congratulating everyone on their football colours. Merton Chamber has now been running for 32 years, and whilst Diana stood as CEO for many of those years, this was Charlotta first AGM as CEO, and she was very excited to share her plans for the Chamber.

Charlotta was joined by Sarah Austin, Chair of the Board of Directors. Sarah outlined the format of proceedings to achieve a balance between formal and having a great evening. Sarah expressed her pleasure in hosting her third AGM for Merton Chamber and welcomed our members and guests, making special mention of members from Merton Council, Paul McGarry, Sarah Xavier, Cabinet Member Eleanor Stringer and Paul Kholer. Sarah confirmed the meeting, which required a set number of members present, was quorate.

FORMAL AGM – Report for the Year 2022 to 2023

Chair's Report

This AGM refers to the financial year ending June 2023. We were still emerging from the Covid years and the Cost-of-Living crisis which was very challenging. The Chamber created the Masterclass Series in partnership with Love Wimbledon, to begin to address the biggest challenges facing businesses, by providing valuable knowledge, expert advice, local contacts, resources to assist their recovery, and return to in person networking events to ignite local connections and trusted business relationships.

We also held another very successful Merton Best Business Awards in 2022, our last one to be held at the All England Lawn Tennis Club.

We continue to work in collaboration with Merton Connected to promote Merton Giving. Merton Giving channels financial grants sourced from generous donations and fundraising efforts to local Charitable organisations deeply rooted in our community. Since its inception in 2019, Merton Giving has raised an impressive £1.2m.

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Our members sit at the heart of what we do. We are very pleased to have a dynamic membership, with 600 members and strong links with our 3 local Business Improve Districts (BID) - Love Wimbledon, South Wimbledon Business Area, and Willow Lane Industrial Area.

Charlotta – Looking back/looking forward

Charlotta joined the Chamber two years ago as Head of Business Development and taking over as CEO three months ago. Charlotta stated she believed changes were good, and we were all working together to build a new chamber. At her first strategy meeting, it was agreed the Chamber's mission statement would be to make members feel they were part of a local business community and be proud to be part of the Chamber. We are achieving this is by promoting members, amplifying members voices, connecting members to other businesses, promoting members successes and stories, and saving members' time.

Highlights of the past year include

Creation of the successful Business Masterclass series- four events covering different topics, were held from January to November 2023, with over 267 attendees, and 200 podcast downloads. 95% of participants said they would recommend them to a friend. We secured a deal with the South London Partnership and the first business sponsored Masterclass was held on the Future of Business Spaces. We are continuing the Masterclass Series and are looking for sponsorships.

Women in Business events in collaboration with Time and Leisure – usually held on International Women's Day which was always well supported, we are now holding these three times a year for women in business.

Re-launch of Young Chamber—now held two to three times a year, sponsored by Roehampton University and South Thames College Group. Also, Tom Crooke from Bobbin Productions has been involved. The aim is to bring together a younger professional group, show them how to network through fun things, as many are now working from home and are lacking managers and mentors to teach them.

Business Breakfast Club—held at the Alexandra pub in Wimbledon, these events are sponsored by Hartley Fowler, and are well supported.

Business Leaders Forum—held twice a year, we get together with our Patrons, Chief Execs, Managing Directors, Chief Operating Officers of the largest companies in Merton to tackle different topics.

Workshops—we held workshops on Introduction to AI in Business, Sustainability, and ran compliance training in Emergency First Aid and also Fire Warden Marshal.

Behind the scenes

Website - Our new website has a member area where member to member offers can be found.
New CRM system —enabling us to make communication with members more personalized and better targeted. Newsletters will be sent out twice a month, and will include future events, local business news and member spotlights

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Upgraded Comms & Socials – we can be followed on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Currently Julia from Roehampton University, our summer intern, helping us to improve our digital marketing.

New members – We attracted 25 new members through a campaign of recorded testimonials from successful business members, and also by offering 25% off for new members.

Merton Best Business Awards 2024 – spearheaded by Sophie Esene, is now in its 10th year. It is on September 19th and there is an amazing number of 192 entries this year and many new businesses have applied. We wouldn't be able to run this without our sponsors, who are this year:

Headline sponsors - London Borough of Merton and WSM

Platinum sponsors - Hartley Fowler, Morr & Co and Romulus Wimbledon Quarter

Gold sponsors – Love Wimbledon, Andrew Scott Robertson, QudoCloud, CHAS, Gem & Co, New Wimbledon Theatre, South Thames College and Domestic and General

Merton Giving – partnered with Merton Connected, Cecilia Moynihan, is the new strategic lead, working alongside Ali, her Merton Connect counterpart. It is a centre hub for businesses and individuals to support the community by contributing money, time or resources.

Thanks to our patron members for their continued support – Hartley Fowler, Morr & Co and South Thames College group.

We are entering into a partnership with John Merriman of Crown Lane Studios to help local businesses with podcasting. The first recording will be held in July 2024.

We are also collaborating with Kingston Chamber to hold a business Expo in October

Formal AGM

Apologies were noted. There were 8 in total.

Slavek Szszeplanski – Mayor

Catherine Fischer – Morr & Co.

Ivor Heller – AFC Wimbledon

John Merriman - Crown Lane

Nick Samuel – Samuel Estates

Gustavo Mofati – Barclays

Pooja Illay - Wimbledon Dental Wellness

Leonie Cooper AM- Labour & Co-operative

Approval of the 2022 Minutes

Proposer: Simon Marsh

Seconded by: Tom Crooke

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

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Financial Report

This covered our accounts from July 2022 to June 2023, a motion from our directors to increase membership subs and reappointment of accountants.

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

Turnover was £269.2k – down from £325.7k in the previous year, when we had special projects. Kickstart – a decrease of £37,832, Peer Learning £24,000 and Green Primary Care Network £22,500. Our income is made up of membership subscriptions, sponsorship, income from events and managed contracts (funding from Government and other bodies for services Masterclasses & Merton Giving). We ended the year with a deficit of £11.2k, compared with a surplus last year of £15.3k, and reserves of £33k. Action has been taken to stabilize the business model to make it more sustainable.

Proposer: Dave Dadds
Seconded: Simon Marsh

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 1st July 2024 by 5% as follows.

	Current price	After increase
Classic not vat registered	180	189
Classic vat registered	395	415
Premier	880	924

Proposer: Elliott Swatton
Seconder: Delia Porter

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 19 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: Paul Ahern
Seconded by: Stacey Fraser

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To re-appoint existing members of the Board of Directors

There were two resignations during the current year, Shernette May – Voluntary sector of Mitcham and Slawek Szczepanski – representing the East European business community

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
Eleanor Merrick – representing the education sector.
Sally Hodgson, representing the large business community.
James McGinlay – a co-opted member representing the London Borough of Merton.

Proposer: Dave Dadds

Secunder: Simon Marsh

To appoint two new members to the board of directors

Kieran Burge – Business owner of DS Burge & Co, Chartered Accountants
Mark Williams – head of Communications and fundraising at Wimbledon Guild

Proposer: Eleanor Merrick

Seconded by: Stacey Fraser

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

The AGM finished with the awarding of prizes to 3 people who made a special effort and came wearing the colours of their favourite European country or football team. 1st prize went to the Golf Groove, 2nd prize to Adele Farquharson, and 3rd to Pietro Palladino.

Charlotta ended by thanking the following:

To our members for their support and belief in our mission, Merton Council, our sponsors, and our partner businesses. Thanks to our Chair, Sarah, and Directors for giving their time freely to support our governance and development. Also, thanks to the Merton Chamber team - Sophie, Tracy, and Bernadette who sent their apologies, Linda, Lauren, Cecilia, Janet and Julia.

And finally, Natalie & Dalma from Hotel du Vin for this beautiful space, Rupal – for helping at this event, and Rebecca Cresta our photographer.

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