

Minutes of the Solihull Chamber of Commerce & Industry

2024 Annual General Meeting

Held on Friday 22nd March 2024

Hogarth's Hotel Solihull, Four Ashes Road, Dorridge, Solihull

1. Welcome

Samantha Frampton (SF) Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Eileen Schofield (ES) advised that the AGM is a formality in line with the Constitution.

ES explained that the AGM was required under the Chamber's Constitution, which sets out the procedure to be followed. Notice of the AGM was sent to all members on the 19th January 2024

Eileen Schofield (ES) - Solihull Chamber President

Samantha Frampton (SF) - Head of Solihull Chamber

Lillian Elekan (LE) - Membership Director, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

2. Minutes of last AGM (taken as read)

ES Minutes of the 2023 AGM were circulated alongside the AGM notice on 19th January 2024 and we will take these as read.

ES Run through proceedings - Agenda and AGM brochure

3. Update from President - Eileen Schofield

Well it's been quite a year; a year of connecting with existing and new members, supporting the businesses who invest in Solihull Chamber of Commerce through events and learning opportunities and taking an integral part in growing the membership of chamber.

I started my term of office determined to listen to the membership and get to the core of what they wanted from their membership of Solihull Chamber. I set up an opportunity for our members to 'Meet the President ' on an informal basis where groups of up to 5 members met with me to give me insight into what Solihull Chamber was doing well, what we could do better and what more they wanted out of their membership. It was a brilliant opportunity for me to hear directly from members who I am pleased to say considered that the Solihull Chamber was working well as a membership organisation, there were comments about the times of day that events were scheduled and a request for more bespoke connectivity to meet new business opportunities. We listened and have shifted the time for some events and are more conscious of making direct connections where possible. Connect, Grow and Support are at the core of our vision and mission on a daily basis.

During the last year our events have regularly sold out with our awards dinner reaching a record number of attendees and the Solihull expo attended by more than

400 attendees. Solihull Chamber represents and engages with 17 sectors from Hospitality to Financial and insurance, manufacturing, professional services to education encapsulating the life cycle of a business and our members. Solihull is voted as one of the best places to live in the UK, the transport infrastructure creates opportunities for swift connectivity both nationally and internationally, our education institutions are rated as some of the best in the country and our retail and night-time economy and cultural events are prestigious and sought after.

The Solihull Economic Strategy for 2023- 2032 sets out the vision for Solihull to be the UK's best-connected economy – 'for business, for people, forever.' This strategy adopts 4 key themes: theme A - a vibrant business economy, theme B great opportunities for everyone, theme C a sustainable economy, theme D thriving places. Solihull Chamber unequivocally supports the strategy for the region. Our programme of events supporting and encouraging business to incorporate sustainability as a principal component of the business growth plans, our growth through people series of events really emphasises the need to invest in people to sustain and support the growth of every business genuinely supports the growth and viability of our members businesses.

Our values and purpose as a Chamber are fundamentally a determination to represent our members interests which are as varied and diverse and the businesses which form our membership, and which is also reflected in our exec committee. The Exec committee is made up of dedicated members who meet to shape and create the opportunities to connect support and grow, they are from businesses which range from large corporates to micro businesses so every voice is heard and all business challenges considered and acted upon through the debate and discussion at our vibrant and engaging exec committee meetings.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of the Head of Solihull Chamber; Samantha Frampton. Sam is visible, determined and active in her support of our members. Always ensuring that our members feel supported and have an opportunity to be included to support the growth of their businesses and to connect to other likeminded business owners and leaders.

This year we have extended our support to the Solihull Moors Charity for a second year. The Charity led by Becci Fox has excelled at being visible as a Charity Partner, the support given to the Charity from our members has extended beyond our expectation, none of this would have been possible without the commitment shown to Solihull Chamber by Becci and her team and providing greater opportunities for our members to support the Charity through donations, mentoring and fundraising opportunities.

This has definitely been a year of learning for me as President, it has been a privilege to take up the lead role for Solihull Chamber and represent our members at GBCC council meetings, roundtable discussions, particularly the transport roundtable hosted by Saqib Bhatti debating and determining a viable solution to the long standing issue of the lack of transport connectivity between the north and the south of Solihull Borough, to official engagements with the Lord Mayor and international dignitaries.

During the course of the next 12 months I have committed to continue to connect and support the growth of our the businesses in our membership and to ensure that Solihull Chamber is the go to membership organisation in our region.

4.Solihull Chamber of Commerce chosen Charity – Solihull Moors Foundation

Becci Fox (BF)

Solihull Moors Foundation are a local charity based in Solihull. Our Aim is to create a positive pathway for people in our community through the power of sport. The foundation offers a variety of programmes designed to support the needs of the communities that we serve. Our common areas of support include education, sports, recreation, and health and wellbeing. Our aim is to improve the quality of life in our region and beyond. We have approximately 2,487 participants who access the services that the foundation on a weekly basis with ages ranging from four years to 103 years.

Being the Solihull Chamber of Commerce’s chosen charity for 23/24 has been an incredible opportunity that has allowed us to work closely together to achieve so much. Solihull Moors Foundation are grateful that our year with the Chamber has been more than raising awareness but it has been a true partnership that together we have added true value to our community. Volunteers have supported us not only in fundraising, but by donating their time (over 156 hours and service support (saving the charity £12,167).

As chosen charity we have been able to increase our support offer to children and young people and families of Solihull. Our partnership has given local businesses opportunities to come along and support seeing how the foundation works on a day-to-day basis. We have also had businesses send staff volunteers on our community holiday camps and feeding programmes. Due to having this extra support we have seen over 300 children receive additional support during the school holiday. Our partnership with the Chamber meant that at Christmas we were able to host our very first Christmas meal for low-income families. Due to the generosity, all 150 attendees went home feeling special after enjoying a three-course Christmas dinner and also receiving Christmas presents and selection packs.

Some businesses have offered sponsorship to our women’s team and school teams, which has meant that we have been able to provide kits to some players, who without this support would not be able to afford a kit. Our school teams have recently taken part in a national tournament and are now able to experience opportunities that they could have only dreamed off. Having a kit has made them feel accepted, confident and proud to be part of a team.

Fundraising support for the foundation has been fantastic this year and the grand total of £13,869 has been raised allowing us to increase our feeding programme during the school holidays. In addition, we have been able to fund a mentoring programme for young people enabling us to support and broaden their horizons around their life choices and pathways for employment. We are extremely grateful that people have dug deep and given not only finance but, more importantly, their

time. The biggest fundraising highlight was our 24-hour cycling event that saw 66 participants and 23 businesses sign up for cycling slots to keep our bikes going.

Our year has chosen charity for Solihull Chamber of Commerce has been extraordinary. We are going into the next year feeling more confident with excitement and vigour and plans to further our work with local businesses, leading to greater opportunities for collaboration in order to impact the Solihull community and beyond.

5.Election of Officers

SF: We now move on to the election of officers and members of the Chamber's Executive Council for the coming 2-year term. Nomination papers were circulated to all Solihull Chamber members alongside the notice of the AGM.

Solihull Chamber President

Under the Chamber's Constitution, Eileen Schofield will continue as President for a second year at this AGM.

Thank Eileen for what has been a great first year having you as our President and I look forward to working with you over the next 12 months.

Election of Vice President

Under the Chamber's Constitution Emma Hewitt will continue as Vice President for a second year at this AGM, where as Susie Ankrett and Vijay Jogia have completed their 2-year term and have created 2 Vice President vacancies.

Susie Ankrett under the Chamber's Constitution is offering herself for re-election as a co-opted Council member at this AGM.

Vijay Jogia under the Chamber's Constitution is offering himself for re-election as a Executive Council member at this AGM.

We received 4 nominations for the Vice President vacancies and as the number of nominations exceeded the number of vacancies and as per the constitution, an online ballot has taken place.

I can now announce that Kevin Johns of Prime Accountants and Rebecca Gater of Solihull College & university Centre will take up the position's as Vice President on the Solihull Chambers Executive Council for a two year period.

Congratulations Kevin and Rebecca

Election of Executive Council Members

Under the Chamber's Constitution Amanda Holden, Ian Rogers, Jas Rohel, Kim Hulse, Pauline Clarke and Steve Whitmarsh will continue as Executive Council members for a second year at this AGM.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Stuart Watson will be resigning from the Executive Council.

Andy Cole has completed his two-year term on the Council and under the Chamber's Constitution is offering himself for re-election as Executive Council member at this AGM.

These changes resulted in there being 2 vacancies for election to the Executive Committee Council.

The appointment of Kevin Johns and Rebecca Gater to Vice President has resulted in an additional 2 vacancies being created for the Executive Committee Council.

We received 7 applications for these 4 vacancies, and as the number of candidates has exceeded the number of places available, as per the constitution, an online ballot has taken place.

I can therefore announce that the following are elected to the Executive Committee Council for a 2-year term.

1. Andy Cole of The NEC Group
2. Erica Burke of the HR Dept Solihull
3. Louise Dunn of The Recruitment Duo
4. Tony Elvin of Touchwood

A further 2 candidates have been selected to join the council for a 12 month term through our co-opted voting seat;

1. Dayna Winter of Brew Twenty Three
2. Susie Ankrett of Plum Executive

This brings the AGM formalities to a close, but before moving on I would like to just take a moment to extend my sincere gratitude to the Council Members standing down today for all their time, effort and support over the last 2 years, thank you Stuart Watson and Vijay Jogia.

And I would also like to offer my congratulations to our new Council members and our co-opted members - I look forward to working with you all.

Congratulations to you all.

May I also take this opportunity to thank our local patrons - Arden Multi Academy Trust, Birmingham Business Park, Hogarth's Hotel Solihull, Prime Accountants, Solihull College & University Centre, Solihull Moors FC, Touchwood and Wavenet.

All of the chamber team and you, our members.

6.GBCC Update

Lillian Elekan (LE) pleasure to be there and provide the GBCC update:

New website went live in October, comprising;

- Improved website
- 'My member' portal area
- New events and awards module
- New email marketing platform
- New features still to be unlocked!
- Brand repositioning, refreshing our look and feel and putting members at the heart of our imagery

Office relocation to embrace:

- New ways of working
- Facilities that reflect our culture and purpose

Overview and Key Findings:

The Business Commission West Midlands has been convened to deliver a roadmap for business growth.

Following years of change, it will offer a fundamental reset of our understanding of what the region's businesses' need to achieve their growth potential.

It has been convened by the GBCC in collaboration with Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

Core areas of questioning:

- What are businesses in the region's growth ambitions?
- What do they believe needs to change to best enable them?
- What do they see as the strengths of the region as a place to do business?

Regional Strengths:

- Central Location
- A world-class education eco-system
- A sense of momentum
- A strong manufacturing heritage, established professional services sector and growing technology sector
- Access to networks
- Harnessing the role of the West Midlands Mayor

Recommendations -Themes:

The public funded business support ecosystem is too fragmented, complex and ambiguous for businesses to effectively navigate. Greater coordination between agencies and authorities at regional level and enhanced devolution offers a real opportunity to shift the dial, create longer term, simpler structures and support aligned to local business needs.

Businesses need to see a sense of urgency and ambition. The issues outlined are already hampering growth and risking the UK falling behind in our international competitiveness or missing opportunities to lead the field.

We need to create the conditions for businesses to upscale and grow at every stage of their journeys – whether that is start-ups, scale ups or existing large and multinational players. The recommendations in this report aim to create that underpinning environment, a roadmap for business growth

Chamber Support: How can we help?

- International Trade
- AI & Digitisation
- Net Zero
- Innovation
- FDI & Inward Investment
- The Business Ecosystem
- The Built Environment
- Cash & Finance
- People, Process & Skills

Useful Links:

- **Global Business Conference 4th June:** Free half day conference on the current state for trade for UK firms, global economic analysis and specialist panel discussions around key markets - [click here](#)
- **The Sustainable Business Series:** content, workshops and a half day conference all dedicated to informing and engaging businesses on the transition to net zero - [click here](#)
- **The Amazon Innovation Accelerator in partnership with the GBCC:** free training programme for SMEs in target sectors on innovation & technology - [click here](#)
- **Innovate UK Business Growth:** funded support for high innovation potential businesses - [click here](#)
- **The Start-Up & Small Business Academy:** free programme for cohorts of Chamber members covering 6 modules - [click here](#)
- **Growth Through People:** content, workshops and a half day conference (21st March) all focused on understanding and adopting best practice leadership & people management techniques and insight - [click here](#)

7. Q & A/Networking

End of Meeting

Thank you from Solihull Chamber of Commerce