

Sutton Chamber Annual General Meeting 2009 - Agenda

Agenda

- Welcome
- Minutes & Matters arising
- Chairman's Report
- Finance Report
- To appoint our treasurer
- To re-appoint the members of the Board
- Special Resolution
- AOB

Welcome

Minutes & Matters arising

The following reports were printed and available at the AGM.

Chairman's Report – Paul Cawthorne

During the year the Chamber continued to grow its activities and partnerships and support local businesses. The Chamber team has 6 Directors and a Management team of 13 which includes the directors.

The team has worked hard to increase the membership through various events and activities and we wish to thank them all for their tremendous efforts. All this work has been achieved on a purely voluntary basis.

We are really grateful to Geoff Matthews for accepting the position as Honorary Treasurer to manage our accounts and Neil Hughes of Copley Clark & Bennett who have accepted the role of Honorary Solicitor and we thank them for their support. We also thank RBI for providing us with the office space in their building to continue to run the chamber office.

Partners

Through the year we grew our relationships with Business Link London, and the Learning and Skills Council and continued to work with local groups and Sutton Council partners to benefit businesses in Sutton.

Events

VIP breakfasts are proving to be very popular every month. Business Forums are held in partnership with the Council and continue to grow their attendance.

The SmartBiz 2009 event was fully supported by the Chamber management team and proved to be well appreciated by the new and potential start up businesses who attended. We have had tremendous support from South London Business & Business Link during the organizing of the event and have received praising feedback on the initial registration and planning. Our initial target was for 50 businesses, and we expect to double that on the day. Further, we are hoping to continue to develop and organize other Business Forum events and Business Workshops over the next year to further support our businesses within the borough.

The Charity Golf Day was attended by 54 players and raised £2500 for St Raphael's Hospice.

Future

We aim to establish a Forum50 for the largest companies in the Borough, establish District Trader Associations and hold monthly Business Workshops to increase our Membership by 100 per year.

Finance

In the financial year the Chamber benefited from a steady membership but without subsidy from elsewhere. We are delighted that Sutton Council has supported us with our endeavours. We also continued to seek alternative sources of income in order to further develop the range of activities on offer. Smarter Travel Sutton provided funding for the Chamber to promote their services across the borough.

People

During the year, Paul Cawthorne continued his role as Chairman of the Board and we welcomed a number of new members of our management team working on a voluntary basis. We formed a Joint Management Committee to negotiate a bid for LAGBI funding.

The Management team met regularly during the year and our thanks go to my fellow board directors and members of the Finance Committee for their input to the work of the Chamber. We thank all of our members for their involvement, contributions and for taking up the growing range of membership benefits and services we are now offering.

We move into the next financial year with confidence in the growing recognition of the Chamber's contribution in Sutton through accreditation, award of contracts and an increase in our profile. We will continue to pursue our strategy of business growth and to get the future of the Chamber on a secure footing.

We are a Chamber of Commerce and will always have the membership at the core of what we do. We will work increasingly with businesses who are and who are not members of the Chamber.

Paul Cawthorne - Director - Sutton Chamber of Commerce Ltd

Partnerships Report – Paul Cawthorne

Throughout the year we attended meetings with Business Link in London, the Learning and Skills Council, The London Development Agency and continued to work with local groups and our Sutton Council Partners to promote Sutton Chamber for the benefit of businesses and the community in Sutton.

The Chamber is represented on the following local organisations

- Sutton Economic & Housing Partnership
- Sutton Education & Skills Partnership
- Sutton Post 14 Partnership
- Sutton Economic Support Task Force
- Sutton Employment Working Group
- Sutton Olympic & Paralympic Forum
- Sutton Transport Liaison Group
- Smarter Travel Sutton
- Sutton Town Centre Partnership
- Rosehill Traders Association
- Kimpton Industrial Park Association
- Carshalton College Business Department
- South London Business
- Sutton Fairtrade Committee
- Sutton Community Fund Panel
- Executive Plus
- Young Enterprise

Paul Cawthorne – Partnership Manager

Treasurer's Report – Geoff Matthews

1) Since taking on the role in December I have advised the JMC not to accept the LAGBI funding on offer due to potential onerous increasing requirements attaching to a reducing pool of monies

2) We have been tidying up the members database and reissuing invoices

3) We have put 2008/9 + 2009/10 accounting activity into a proper accounting package facilitating double entry bookkeeping

4) Going forward we are looking to price events held for the council and run a rolling budget + regular cash flow projections

5) We will liaise with Natalie re chasing unpaid invoices

Geoff Matthews - Treasurer

Membership report – Michael De Lemos

Sutton Chamber has had some major issue with regards to understanding its membership offer over the past 12 months and also understanding which companies are paid up members and those who are not.

In order to understand where we were we first needed to make a few changes to the way we stored and catalogued our membership documentation, what we had and where the holes were, which was done back in the second half of 2008, with the appointment of a new financial director we were able to identify where we stood financially with our members and quickly resolved any outstanding membership issues – we are currently in a position where we are in control of membership – which has seen a growth from 40 members from July 2008 to 64 members in July 2009 a growth of members by over 60% which we plan to continue to grow over the next 12 months.

How did we obtain this growth – By providing a Membership Offer – part of this offer is made up of updating the face of the Chamber, upgrading our own internal documentation to reflect the changes in the Chamber, such as the LOGO, Application Forms, Membership Benefit Forms and the web site, which is used for the registration of the events run for our members.

Events to raise the profile of the Chamber and increase Membership

- VIP Breakfast
- Business Forums
- Golf Day – April 2009
- Logo Update - Refresh
- Web Site
- Application Forms are available from the web site
- Telephone Answering Service – Added
- Smart Biz
- Town Centre Procurement Events
- 2012 Compete For

Additionally the Chamber has invested in its exhibition display systems to encourage membership at events run by the Chamber and events run outside the Chamber, the feed back has been very positive.

Membership documentation, database and support is currently supported by the appointment of Natalie Ions, who works closely with Geoff Matthews and Michael deLemos who also support membership.

Membership for the next 12 months - July 2009 – July 2010

As well as continuing on the delivery of events throughout the next 12 months the Chamber is looking to add value by linking up with external organisations such as Carshalton College, Business Groups to deliver business support and educational events, the key for the next 12 months is to add value through partnership and to provide support to business in Sutton.

We are looking to grow membership by another 60% in the next 12 months from 64 to 100 members by July 2010, we have already added new associated events for members such as a New Golf Society with St Raph's due to take place on 30th July next week.

- Chamber Golf Society in conjunction with St Raphael's Hospice

Appointments for members will be set up during the next 12 months by Chamber Directors to deliver Membership Certificates and allow the Chamber the opportunity to speak with our members about up and coming events and support for there business, the appointment of Graham Willins working with the Chamber for the next 12 months will provide resources to visit members

Events Report - Laurence Lowne

The Chamber has run 9 VIP Breakfasts during the last 12 months with a range of speakers on local and national issues with particular emphasis during the latter part of 2008, on how to survive during the downturn.

Since March of 2009, the focus has been more upbeat, with members of the professional speakers association bringing their knowledge of PR, Marketing and Sales and to encourage people to rise above the economic winter, thus implementing plans for positivity and the subsequent success of growth.

In addition, local MPs, Paul Burstow and Tom Brake have attended, answering questions and meeting businesses - their support, as that of Sutton Council is very much appreciated.

The breakfast attracts an average of 37 attendees, and there are plans to push that number over 45 this coming year as the downturn reverses, with an exciting range of subjects lined up for the autumn. The use of a buy and sell board negates the need for attendees to have great presentation skills, and there will be focus on greater use of this on the day and post meeting via the Chamber website.

There will be soon be the ability to pay online prior to the breakfast, and this will also help boost attendee levels.

The Holiday Inn plays host, and continues to deliver to a high standard and at least once a year we will visit another location for a breakfast, ensuring the Chamber reaches a new audience.

I conclude by thanking my fellow Board members for their unstinting support of the breakfasts (& appreciation of my humour), without whom the breakfast would not take place; the recent addition of Natalie Ions to the Administrator role, has meant that Michael Delemos is now able to have some sleep prior to a breakfast.

Web site report – Peter Hunter

A list of actions I want to move forward on for the website and IT:

1. Newsletter – Design a Chamber Newsletter for a weekly email, with training for Natalie so that she is able to change and amend, and send out to all in our database on a weekly basis. 1st Sept 09
2. PayPal for payments and also event payments to be taken online. The use of a visa swap mobile device for the Chamber also which will allow us to get more income due to some people not having the ready cash and always using credit cards etc, and the fact we then forget to invoice them later on. In time for Next VIP meeting.
3. CRM system and remote email access for the chamber. Working off excel sheets is not the best way forward. We have all the contacts loaded up on to the newsletters system and could use this as a database, but we should use a web based CRM system and keep the Newsletter apart as we can always import into any Newsletter systems and this will allow flexibility in the future. Would be an option here to use a billing system which also integrates into the CRM so that PDF invoices are produced and sent of at each renewal on auto pilot. So systems I use for my business anyway and don't see any problems, just the time it takes to config and integrate. November 2009
4. Train Natalie to edit and amend the Sutton Chamber website. August 2009
5. Need to push forward on deadlines, and work to a weekly time frame deadline and cut off date for PR to review, proof read all items, before we send a Newsletter out via email or update the website. At the moment it is done in a fire fighting mode.

A list of action to be done for the team and may not fall under what I can do.

1. Help produce Brand guild lines, which outline font, banner, graphics and other such details so that we all are sending out the correct view of the Chamber on all letters, websites emails, etc etc.

Peter Hunter

Work-related learning report – Chris Jones

Since June 2008, the Chamber and its members have been actively involved in a number of events with schools and young people. The aim has been to develop sustainable relationships between schools, young people and the local business community that will benefit all and help Sutton young people to be ready for employment within the local community and beyond.

Some of the activities include;

- o June 2008 Year 9 students from Wilson's School undertook a challenge set by Arnold and Self and a number of students visited the company's depot.
- o November 2008 "Money4Mobiles" enterprise challenge with St Raphael's Hospice, 10 schools participated, Michael de Lemos was a judge on the day, the Chamber sponsored the event and provided the trophy.
- o Spring term 2009 "Rucksack to Briefcase" student employability project at Carshalton HS for Girls with Clavell Rowe Publications Ltd and Smith and Byford. Following this two students have just completed their work experience placements as heating engineers.
- o A number of workshops and activities in schools including speed careers for Year 8 students at Wilsons School, a Careers Academy workshop with Greenshaw High School's Yr12 students, a careers afternoon at St Philomena's HS in November saw a number of Chamber members supporting
- o April 2009 VIP Breakfast saw three students from Carshalton HS for Girls spoke with energy, enthusiasm and confidence about the Money4Mobiles enterprise challenge and how members from the local business community helped with their understanding of finances and how a business operates
- o Throughout the year a number of Chamber members have taken students on work experience placements and teachers have attended VIP Breakfasts
- o Chamber members have been business advisors for the Young Enterprise Company Programme and the Chamber sponsored two of the awards at the Sutton and Merton Finals in April

Summary

The support and involvement of the local business community in activities to develop young people's employability, their understanding of the world or work and help to make them "work ready" is greatly valued by schools and young people. Next year we will build upon this healthy programme

Public Relations & Communications Report – Anthea Lashley-Small

Since taking up the position of Director responsible for public relations in February 2009, my first objective was to address the perceived image of the Chamber. The internal opinion was that the Chamber was not being taken seriously. Hence the organisation was not attracting new members.

However, on the positive side, the Chamber had developed good relations with the Sutton Council, some areas of the media and with other service providers such as Business Link for London and Business Focus.

PR Objective

The main objective was therefore was to

1. Improve the image of the Chamber
2. Position Chamber as the mouth piece of the business community
3. Develop and maintain business relationships with other professional organisations

Improve the image of the Chamber

The first port of call was to ascertain the real image of the Chamber as viewed by members, the business community and the media. To obtain the view of our members, we prepared a questionnaire which is scheduled to be distributed amongst members when the membership list has been updated. Members and visitors alike are also invited to give their views at our hosted events and these are being noted. This is presently being undertaken by our new administrator with assistance from our director responsible for accounts. The questionnaire is also to be distributed to the business community. This will commence when the database of 7000 businesses in Sutton is cleansed. Some businesses in the outlying districts such as Wallington and Carshalton have received these questionnaires through our district coordinator.

There has always been good media relations, but some areas of the media were quite eager to develop a closer working relationship. Arrangements have been made between the Chamber and the media that the Chamber board directors be contacted on business issues in Sutton. News releases have been submitted regularly and have been published. We are now being contacted regularly, so we are on our way on being viewed as the spokesperson for the business community. However, we still need the input of the business community to be able to speak on their behalf. Previous relationships have been developed and are being maintained between the Chamber and South London Business Magazine and Time and Leisure Magazine along with local press. At present we have a regular column in the South London Business Magazine and are considering a feature in the local press.

The Chamber continues to develop and maintain business relationships with other professional organisations, such as the Sutton Council and other government suppliers such as local colleges and business advisors and suppliers as Business Link for London and Business Focus. It is the aim of the Chamber to use these associations for the benefit of its members. Presently we as a Chamber, we have one of the best records of Chamber Council relationships.

The Chamber has been represented at a number of external events by various members of the Board. Chamber members have been represented at events as far afield as London and at events hosted by the mayor and his department. The members of the Board have presented questions or views on behalf of members to highlight issues affecting the business community in Sutton.

The visual image was addressed with a new logo being selected. The new design is being used on all stationery and reflects the new vibrant image of the Chamber. A new website has been designed and is still a work in progress.

Communications & Administration

We have employed a part-time administrator - Natalie Ions who we selected after we received a number of applications through Job Centre Plus, The Citizens Advice Bureau, a local employment agency and from an individual.

Natalie has been doing an Herculean task of co-ordinating the work of six directors and five board members. She is in the process of sorting our membership and assists with events and general correspondence.

As we move forward, the Board will meet to set and implement further objectives to reposition the Sutton Chamber first point of contact for business in Sutton.

Business Support – Graham Willins

In addition to the monthly Chamber networking breakfasts the Chamber continued to support the Council in the delivery of the Sutton Business Forum (SBF). Two SBFs were held in October and November attracting over 100 businesses and two workshops were held in conjunction with Business Link in London.

The Chamber also supported the Smart.biz event which targets potential entrepreneurs among the residents who are interested in starting a business. The event provides free seminars and exhibitors who provide services to new and young businesses and was attended by over 100 individuals.

While the above activity maintained the momentum of the Chamber, ideally the Chamber would have wished to bring more events and services to the business community. However a great deal of the Board's time was invested in compiling a business plan to deliver services for the Council in return for grant funding over a three year period.

Finally a decision was taken that the level of activity being considered when related to the available funding would not have been commercially viable for the Chamber to proceed. As a result the offer was declined but the Chamber stressed their continued willingness to work in partnership with the Council.

Since the year end the Council is now seeking to use the expertise of the Chamber to deliver the business support projects under the Economic Recovery plan for the borough. There will be funding to support events and a seconded resource to increase the Chamber's capacity and work has already commenced. This will further raise the profile of the Chamber in the borough through increased activity.

Finance Report

To appoint our treasurer

To re-appoint the members of the Board

Special Resolution

AOB