

## MINUTES OF THE 71<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### DEAL & WALMER CHAMBER OF TRADE Ltd.

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at the Royal Hotel, Deal

Council Members Present:

Peter Varrall	(President)
Peter Jull	(Chairman)
Sue Beer	Peter Davies
Bernie O'Connell	Lisa Lauder
Morag Turner	Garry Kemp
Pat Heath	

C of T Members Present: Julie Kemp – Tower Leaflet Distribution

#### 1. President's Welcome

Peter Varrall opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Eileen Rowbotham

#### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 70<sup>th</sup> AGM having been circulated were approved and agreed as a true record, all in favour.

#### 4. Matters Arising

None

#### 5. Chairman's Report

During 2019, Garry Kemp of Tower Design & Print. Morag Turner reflexologist and Lisa Loader of Aspen Waite joined the Chamber Board. Deal Town Council nominated Eileen Rowbotham as their representative member and she replaced Sue Beer. At the end of the year Simon Pollard stepped down to concentrate on other voluntary roles and business but will continue to help the Christmas lights team. Peter Jull and Peter Varrall were again re-elected as Chairman and President respectively.

An initiative to promote custom for local shops and businesses was launched and branded "**Love Local**". It is co-ordinated by a separate committee with outside members and a paid virtual assistant appointed to promote the initiative through social media. Grant money was used to acquire advertising materials to be used at the south end of the town centre and in participating businesses.

The closure of Marks & Spencer was a disappointing loss from the High Street. Rather than pursue an unrealistic appeal for them to stay the Chamber concentrated on encouraging other potential occupiers to look at Deal as a place to do business. Optimism remains good that a new occupier will soon be found. Travelodge and KFC were reported to be looking for Deal locations. Travelodge chose Discovery Park in

Sandwich instead and KFC want a site on a main road, yet to be found. Barclays Bank announced they will be staying in Deal – for now.

Aldi did open in Deal after previous occupants of the site moved; Sunhouse moved to the High Street and Jilly's Dry Cleaners to Broad Street where not long afterwards a fire seriously damaged the property, they were open again by the end of the year. Resurfacing of Middle Street car park at the same time as Aldi construction closed other spaces didn't seem to have too detrimental an impact on trade. Any benefit from having Aldi in the town has yet to perceptibly materialise.

The Chamber advised on the size of retail unit most likely to be attractive in the redevelopment of The Royal in King Street but council planners pushed the owners in another direction. The Chamber was successful in helping one member save £000's in business rates and advised others on action to take to also achieve business rate savings.

After much lobbying in favour of safeguarding Manston Airport for aviation use the Chamber welcomed the success of Riveroak in purchasing the site and the raised expectations that it will soon reopen. Thanet District Council were also lobbied over proposals to classify Westwood Cross as a town centre thus enabling expansion to take place without consideration of the impact on trade in Deal. The Chamber has been participating in stakeholder meetings to maximise the benefit of the 149<sup>th</sup> Open coming to Sandwich in boosting business during and around the event and in attracting longer term inward investment.

Stranger in the Window saw record participation. Promoting the competition in the carnival parade was done in conjunction with Rotary's pirate treasure hunt but before the end people and leaflets were getting rather too soggy in the rain. But the summer also saw an extended heat wave with shops struggling to provide a comfortable environment for customers and staff on the hottest days and even closing. A group of travellers set up camp by Deal Castle and one night of rowdy behaviour cost seafront business £000s in damage, lost business and extra security costs. Reports by Chamber members of the impact on them help persuade the police to take unusually swift action to move them on.

As refurbishment of the Turk Clock continues the extent of the damage is further revealed and the return date extended. Work on an upgrade to the Chamber's website was begun.

A hustings for the December general election saw an unprecedented demand for admission to the town hall and some frayed tempers among those left outside while the heckling inside was rather one sided but more restrained. The auction to raise funds for the Christmas lights raised a record sum. Thanks are also due to Chris Moore who collected a substantial sum by busking in the precinct. The main strings of lights were extended northward by attaching them to trees in Union Road car park. Plans for further extensions and enhancement continue but are restricted by available volunteer time. The dressing and undressing of a record 125 trees was made easier by the help of local youth and sports groups. The best Christmas window competition was won by Wale & Son on The Strand.

At the end of the year there were 156 members.

6. Annual Accounts

PJ handed out the accounts explaining them to those present, the accounts were prepared by PJ and checked by PAD as correct. Proposed by PV and seconded by PAD, all in favour.

7. Council Elections

No new members elected, existing committee elected on block.

8. Election of President by Chamber Council

Peter Varrall was nominated to return as President by Peter Jull who thanked Peter for his previous year's good service to the chamber. This was seconded by PD and all present were in favour.

9. Any Other Business

None was mentioned

Meeting closed at 7.15pm