



Spalding & District Area Members' Meeting

Tuesday 1st March 2011, Broad Street Business Centre, Spalding

Meeting Summary Notes

Members and Guests in Attendance:

Jason Rooke, President (Rooke's Pet Products); Nigel Baker (Our Heritage); Judy Brooks (Smart Cabs); Matt Clark (ACTIV); Philip Hall (Turners); Debbie Hough (Chattertons); Andrew Inkley (J F Inkley); Vicky Lord (Fairytale Wedding Company); Michelle Morley (Spalding Energy); Angela Newton (A P Sales); David Norton (Springfields Events Centre); Adam Patman (SHDC); Phil Pell (The Office Shop); Mr & Mrs Stublely (Occasions Jewellers); Tracy Turnell (Springfields Outlet Shopping); Mark Uylett (Lloyds TSB); Nigel Wallis (Baytree); Jan Whitbourn (Tulip Radio); Peter Williams (Punchbowl).

Apologies:

Simon Beardsley, Simon Burton, Simon Clarke, Christine Hanson, Julie Grant, David Sanderson, Darryl Simpson, Peter Smeaton, Tony Wright.

1. President's Report:

The President welcomed members and guests (potential new members Nigel Wallis from Baytree and Judy Brooks from Smart Cabs) to the meeting and presented his report including a summary of activities since the last meeting held in January and matters related to the following:

- i) Transport links meeting with Norfolk Green
- ii) Chamber members' visit to the Red Lion Quarter
- iii) Progress on the Chamber website – www.spaldingareachamber.co.uk
- iv) Salt/Grit Bins – contact will be made with Jonathan Pearson, LCC Highways re submitting a request for additional bins.

The President reiterated that his main ambition for the Chamber was that it became the strongest network of businesses in the area, with the primary objective of providing a united voice for its membership which would then be directed, by whatever means necessary, towards improving the economic prospects and general well-being of its members, their businesses and the local community.

2. Partnership Updates:

a) SHDC

i) LCC Highways

The President referred to plans for road works scheduled in the Crescent on 13th/14th April. Clarification to be obtained about the actual location of the works and whether or not they would require a closure or just traffic control lights. Additionally, members asked for confirmation that the planned works for Woolram Wygate were not being scheduled at the same time as those being carried out in Winsover Road as this would cause considerable disruption around the town.

Peter Williams reported on difficulties he had experienced in reporting certain maintenance matters to Highways. The Chamber would request clarification from Jonathan Pearson on the best way to deal with complaints and queries.

Judy Brooks (Smart Cabs) explained the implementation and enforcement issues related to the changes SHDC had introduced to the hackney carriage licensing regulations. In particular the controls on ranks and the changes in seating regulations (for 8 seater vehicle) were causing most difficulties. This was a matter which would be raised at the SHDC Portfolio group meeting, to be held after the May elections, if discussions with the licensing officer failed to achieve any changes to SHDC's interpretation of the regulations. Members agreed that taxi providers were an important part of the local transport offering and were particularly key to servicing the night time economy and bringing visitors to the town.

ii) Red Lion Quarter Summary

Those members who had visited the new Red Lion Quarter had been very impressed with both the building and the facilities and there was general agreement that once it was fully occupied and "open for business" it would be an attractive destination for visitors and local people. The building included a training restaurant, food hall, Boston College education facilities and serviced offices for rent. The marketing team at Springfields Outlet Shopping had been contracted to work on a promotional launch campaign which would include some TV advertising before Easter.

b) Police

There was no police representation at the meeting. Members considered the lack of enforcement of no parking restrictions. Debbie Hough explained that local councils could apply to replace the criminal offence element of the parking legislation which would take enforcement away from the police and allow civil enforcement rules to be applied. It was agreed that this was another matter to raise at the next meeting with the Portfolio group. It was possible that in the future volunteers or apprentices, supervised by the Chamber, could be a way of enforcing parking restrictions and therefore improving the experience of shoppers visiting the town.

3. Security - Peter Williams:

Peter Williams provided an update on Pub Watch matters and explained some of the regulations which Licensees had to enforce. The police were still looking for premises for the CCTV equipment and also needed more volunteer monitoring staff. A number of members raised particular concerns about the police response to certain local issues and it was agreed that it would be helpful if a police representative could be present at future meetings.

4. Events/Activities:

a) 2011 Christmas Event – Jan Whitbourn, Darryl Simpson, Adam Patman

Jan Whitbourn confirmed that the 2011 Christmas Event would be held on 3rd and 4th December, with the town centre holding their main activities on the Saturday and the Crescent traders holding theirs on the Sunday. The plan was to ensure that both days were successful by offering a mix of traditional seasonal activities directed towards increasing business in and around the town. Adam Patman confirmed that SHDC were still reviewing their budget (and his own position) but he expected that they would be prepared to support the event with a financial contribution, possibly around £1,500, which was in-line with their budget for 2010. Further discussions were to take place with Darryl Simpson and the Crescent traders on the detailed programme. Jan asked that everyone submitted just one idea for the event so that they had a good selection of possibilities to choose from. Eon Energy may help with funding for upgrading the lights and hopefully all the retailers could be encouraged to put lights in their windows as well.

b) Speed-Networking Event 17th March – Jason Rooke, Tony Wright

The President confirmed that the Speed-Networking Event would go ahead on the 17th March and encouraged members to book their places plus spread the word to non-members to encourage them to attend.

c) Love Where You Live/Clean Up Campaign – Christine Hanson

Christine Hanson was unable to attend the meeting but had indicated that she hoped to hold another event in April.

d) Blooming Spalding – Christine Hanson

Angela Newton confirmed that hanging baskets would again be made available to town centre businesses at a cost of £40 (watered) and £25 (water your own). The town had been awarded a "Britain in Bloom" Silver Gilt in 2010 which was the highest achievement in the last 10 years. A proposal to plant out more grasses and display more rock features was being considered to reduce on the cost of annual bedding planting.

5. Media and Publicity - Tony Wright:

a) Spalding Area Chamber Website

Tony Wright was unable to attend the meeting but the President confirmed that the new website www.spaldingareachamber.co.uk (created by Lance Design & Media) is now live and content will be updated regularly. There will be a members' log-in facility for news items and other Chamber information and offers.

6. Tourism Issues - David Norton:

David Norton updated the meeting on the announcement that Visit Lincolnshire (VL) had gone into administration. LCC were considering how best to maintain the website and other key elements of the work that VL carried out in promoting and marketing the county. The Chamber was launching its Tourism & Hospitality Chamber on the 31st March which should encourage more accommodation and attractions providers to join as members. It seemed likely that areas such as South Holland and the Fens, the Coast, the Wolds and the City of Lincoln may have to work on their own visitor economy initiatives, with just an "umbrella" organisation linking these key county areas together for targeted marketing and advertising campaigns, but using a much reduced budget than VL had been able to spend over recent years.

7. Funding Opportunities/Projects – David Norton, Nigel Baker, Peter Williams:

a) Vintage bus project update and meeting with Norfolk Green

David Norton reported on the successful meeting with Norfolk Green and the opportunities to use their revised timetable of three buses an hour between Springfields and Spalding to improve the number of visitors travelling between the two locations. Additionally, it had been agreed to review the current bus route to establish if a new stopping point could be located in the town centre or in Double Street. This would help in the promotion of joint ticketing with the water taxis during the summer months and generally encourage more visitors to link their visit to Springfields with a trip to the town. After some discussion it was also agreed that the proposal for a vintage bus link between Springfields and the town would be postponed for the moment so that progress could be made on marketing and promoting the Norfolk Green service. This should bring a visitor footfall benefit to the Chamber's town centre businesses within the next few weeks.

8. Representation & Lobbying - Simon Burton:

Simon Burton was unable to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the Chamber would need an updated list of officer contacts following the current SHDC staffing re-organisation and then a list of new portfolio holders and other important council contacts after the May elections. Additionally the next meeting date between SHDC and the Chamber would need to be agreed immediately after the election and a list of agenda items identified for discussion.

9. Membership - Philip Hall:

The President reported two new members following the HSBC Networking Event and also hoped that Baytree and Smart Cabs would confirm their membership after attending the meeting. Other members also indicated that they were still actively promoting membership and the target of 100 members in the first year was still achievable.

10. Any Other Business:

Adam Patman outlined some of the activities at Ayscoughfee Hall and introduced Vicky Lord who distributed information on a planned Wedding Event and outlined the services offered by the Fairytale Wedding Company.

Following some reported comments about the activities of the Chamber, there were a number of ideas suggested for improving the information made available to members (and prospective members) and the reporting of the success the Chamber was having as a forum for delivering its members' ambitions. However, it was agreed that having only been in existence for ten months, it was often difficult for members to see any physical evidence of the hard work and commitment that had already gone into getting the structure of the organisation working so effectively, so quickly. Many of the representations being made on behalf of members currently involved lots of lobbying and influencing on their behalf for medium and longer term projects, although it was hoped that there would be some more visible benefits of membership in the coming months. It was agreed that minutes of meetings needed to be circulated as soon as possible and that a press release should also be sent out. David Norton agreed to undertake this. Now that the website was up and running, it was possible that within the members' area there could be a news bulletin and blog. Also, in order to encourage more member participation it was suggested that the Chamber Council should look at the formation of active sub-committees with common interests or to progress special projects.

11. Date of Next Meeting:

Tuesday 3rd May 2011; 5.30pm for prompt 5.45pm start at Broad Street Business Centre. This meeting may include the AGM. If so, confirmation and details will be circulated as soon as possible.