**Minutes of the Otley Chamber of Trade and Commence meeting**

**held Tuesday 15th September at 6pm via Zoom Video Link**

**Present:**

Simond Raybould (Chair) Cambrig Comuters/Print Crew

Trevor Backhouse (Chamber Spokesperson) Patisserie Veonnoise

Katie Burnett Courtyard Planters/BID

Tom Hatley Christopher Little /BID

Peter Heald Lund of Otley/OTP

Richard Hughes The Yorkshire Wordwright

Ish Otley Mobiles

Victorian Oldham Cranbourne Accountancy

Pippa Ridley (Membership Secretary) Entempa

Tim & Helen Wilkinson Dowghill House

**Apologise:**

Les Winder

**1. Election of Officers**

TB said, following discussions with members it was decided to postpone the Chamber election to March 2021. As pointed out by a lot of members the Constitution says that nomination forms should go out in January followed by the election in March to cover the roles of Junior Vice President, Vice President and President. SR has offered to continue chairing the meetings until that time. When a new President has been elected, the Executive Group is to take more of an active role to relieve the President by taking some of the weight off his/her shoulders.

Also it was suggested: it might be worth putting on the nomination form asking for new members to join the Executive Group, and allocate those members to a project.

**2. Proposed Meetings**

Proposed the Otley Chamber has a meeting every month (excluding August & December) and meetings to be conducted through Zoom until things get back to normal and they may be able to hold some social events in between. The question was posed: why more regular meetings? The answer was because of the pandemic and isolation. The Chamber should be more in touch with its members and more frequently. Expressing experiences/concerns will help the Chamber & its members support each other through this pandemic period. If these meetings prove not to be of valuable, then the Chamber needs to be more flexible.

In the meantime there is a need to find out if the members’ contact details are correct and PR (when the membership renewal takes part, early next year) going to try to get everyone to update their details. In the meantime, a heading on one of the emails will go out to all members asking them to confirm they have received it and then we will know whether they are getting them or not. HW also confirmed, that the invitation to this meeting & the AGM was put on Facebook & Twitter twice, so businesses should be getting the information through.

Business Meetings to be held **monthly** followed by the Executive to meet directly after the monthly zoom meetings. AGREED

**3. Christmas Social Evening**

An idea was floated for January 2022 to have a Xmas Party/Celebration combined event for January, probably at Westbourne House and inviting other organisations. Together the Chamber should be able to achieve quite a big group.

**4. Otley Co-ordination Group (OTC, BID, OTP, OCT & LCC)**

KB was asked if she would be happy to represent the Chamber and her answer was yes she is happy to go to the meetings and report back. The group has revolved from the tourism strategy side and recently it has been about covering Otley (website and a brand) and about getting more coach trips and supporting day trip tourism. There is now a move to try and get people to stay in Otley a little bit longer and at the last meeting TB mentioned the tourism leaflets. At the time the Town Coordination Group was going to pay for those leaflets going be displayed & distributed to TIC’s so there was plan for that, but it was pulled for this year. Currently working on what future support businesses/residents need re Covid-19. They have also been looking at the active travel plan funding (Central Government money cascaded down though WYCA) small sums of money to encourage people to walk and cycle on short journeys – but rumoured that Otley has been quietly dropped (this to be confirmed) so just watch this space! And if we do not get this funding, that is not to say there won’t be some spending in Otley during the months to come, but if it comes it will come from a different pot. Just to confirm Otley should still get the Sheffield bike racks.

Town Benchmarking - this falls under a number of categories: footfall counting, looking at shops and their different uses as categorised under the Town and Country Planning usage class order. TW has benchmark the whole town last Sun and this information is back with JK (OTC) and is also on drop box if anyone wants to look at it. The information can be compared year on year.

If Otley could get a group of landlords together it would be incredibly useful, but recognises the challenges. The owners of Orchard Gate are very helpful and we could speak to them. Another of the main landlords, unfortunately we had to cross swords with them last year on a couple of issues as we made it known, that should any businesses be struggling with their landlords (repairs or any other issues) we would to try help them. Only two businesses were struggling and we took issue with the landlord (the same landlord in both cases) and not sure how well they took it, although they did remedy both problems within a couple of days to the satisfaction of the tenants.

If we can get a group of people together that actually see the bigger picture we might be able to make some progress.

VO asked: what you are looking to achieve with the landlords? RH answered: to actually involve them in any plans we might come up with to change the shape of Otley Town Centre. As a Town Council we have limiting powers, we can work with Leeds who have highway powers, but even that you are only actually shaping the streets. If you want to do anything more in terms of building the place then you are talking about landlords. It might be as simple as putting flowers here and there or change the way particular things look. Sometimes you can do that with the tenants but sometimes you have to go further. Some town centres have actually got landlords and tenants and other people round the table to have interesting discussions about what type of town centre they want. If we got enough landlords involved it could go into some interesting directions when finding out the landlords opinions. We are willing to do little things to make the town centre a better place to come. Obviously a lot of this will be achieved by what can actually be done. If it changes to the town centre it depends in effect whether it is going to be on private land, such as Orchard Gate. There is already the money coming in from the tenants of the business owners and this money is going to Otley BID.

Unfortunately, you can end up with too many fingers in the same pie. Nobody quite knows who is doing what and that is a concern, but it was acknowledge that one of the things we are trying to do is recognise the diversity of groups and trying to get them work in the same direction.

VO said there is a similar situation emerging in the centre of Harrogate, again it was push come shove and it will be up to what will be left of Harrogate District Council or North Yorkshire under devotional – whatever. But trying to bring in landlords who may be overseas or at the other end of the country they will end up putting the onus back on to the tenants.

Another issues a lot of the centre of Otley is under the Conservation Area anyway. So long as the Conservation Area rules are adhered to, maybe that is where there should be more enforcement.

RH said he recognises that it is going to be an up-hill struggle and comments are very welcome and he will take them back to the Otley Co-ordination Group.

**5. Sunday Christmas Opening and Window Competition**

Due to Covid and since the rule of 6 bill, this has changed since we did the agenda. Although we cannot promote any individual businesses but if those businesses want to contact us we can (through HW) put them on Facebook and help promote them that way. But they will have to do their own risk assessment. The VF organisers do not want to run the window competition this year but could we ask businesses to decorate their windows and perhaps vote on the best window through social media. Put a message out asking businesses to decorate their windows and send us a picture then show the pictures of social media and the one that gets the most votes wins the cup & £25 voucher donated by the Victorian Fayre. This item is on the agenda, again, at the next Town Co-ordination Meeting any other thoughts and Katie will take it back to the Co-ordination Group.

Sunday December 20th the Christmas Farmers’ Market is going ahead and this draws in a number of people.

**6. Eat out to help out - continuation**

Obviously the Government have stopped supporting this scheme, so how can the Chamber help other businesses? A lot of business in Otley are continuing with this scheme and are paying for it themselves. KB shares all the restaurant/café/pubs posts on Facebook & Twitter who are continuing with this scheme. But again it is getting the businesses to include the Chamber in their posts.

Grants between 1k-3k will be available to help SME’s that have been directly impacted by the pandemic - first come first served. This grant in non-repayable with only 4 questions to answer. CD to circulate the information to members. **ACTION**

**7. Members Issues**

7.1 The BID had a phone call from a person who just wanted to ask about the ruling/use of facemask for businesses and their employees as there is a lot of confusion about what to wear and when it is ok not where face masks. A quick look on the Government website basically exempts employees from waring them because the business should have done a health & safety assessment, but the general public may be unaware of this and they feel uncomfortable when entering a shop and staff are not wearing masks. Also a lot of businesses are taking the initiative to help and protect their customers and some have gone to extreme measures with floor signage and extra shields, but if customers don’t see employees wearing masks - as this is the most visible, they start to feel unsafe. Its businesses understanding the public perspective and the public no understanding the businesses perspective where they don’t see the whole picture. But some businesses go to extreme measures to make the environment safe – but the public don’t/cannot see those safeguards.

The Businesses could display the Covid-19 secure poster which was part of the BID pack and it’s up to the customers to choose what shops they feel comfortable entering.

TH reported that the Otley BID distributed the majority of its PPE around Otley but was left with 30 rolls of tape and hand pumps and will be putting those on Ebay.

7.2 Otley Town Partnership – PH just mentioned a couple of things:

* The Ashfield Development is underway, demolishing all the bottom end which is where the care home is going. Not causing any disruption to the town and the moment but there is a lot of demolition going on. They have already put in ‘a change-of- use’ covering some of the other buildings, from offices to residential. So what we suspected, this development is going to be nothing like the original plans.
* We have received some communication from Otley Carnival. Due to a number of resignations they will be struggling for the future to put this event on unless some other organisation is willing to take it on. OTP Directors meet tomorrow and this will be brought up under the agenda.

7.3 HW said that following a Business Awards meeting it was talked about the running of the business awards next year. What we would like to do at the Chamber’s November’s Business meeting is hijack 15 minutes to launch it, as there will be a few things that will change and we are not planning a big event night.

7.4 Dowgill House is up for sale. If you need any information contact TM.

7.5 For future Chamber Business meetings if any business would like to take the floor for 5-10 minutes they can come along and promote their business.

7.6 Otley Show 2021 which is held in May. If it is going ahead the Chamber would like to get the Marquee up and running again to showcase 20-30 businesses.

**8. Date of next meeting**

TBA