



MAIDENHEAD
& DISTRICT
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

April, 2017

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

During another busy year, I continued focus on delivering against my five point strategic plan, designed to help the Chamber move closer to its full potential. Through the launch of new networking clubs, pursuit of collaborative endeavours and other initiatives, the Chamber's profile improved which consequently increased membership. The Chamber has also enjoyed the highest level of sponsorship in its existence, which helped provide new opportunities and cater for more successful events.

A brief update on each of the executive subgroups (or committees), will help portray how the Chamber has progressed over the last twelve months in greater detail.

Events, Education and Training

Significant effort has been expended on running professional events as requested by members. Breakfast and Lunch Clubs were launched during February and March respectively. The former meets on the second Friday of each month and the later on the last Thursday of each month at Fredrick's Hotel. Attendees to the lunch club have enjoyed prize draws for a sponsored quarter page advert in the Advertiser.

Main events included presentations from Google, Great Western Rail (GWR), Network Rail, Roger Harrop (international growth expert) and the Annual Gala Dinner, which attracted record attendance of 105 guests held at CIM Moor Hall (congratulations to Reena Sandhu to whom I presented the President's Cup for her executive contribution to the Chamber). Forthcoming main events include Google (back by popular demand!), the Managing Director of Boots and Kate Russell – the longest serving reporter on "BBC Click" – a BBC technology programme which is broadcast internationally.

Two open meetings, to which all businesses were invited, were held during the year. The first event focused on parking strategy, with lead member Cllr Carwyn Cox along with RBWM's strategic director for services. The lead member for Maidenhead and Regeneration, Cllr David Evans, presented an update on Maidenhead's regeneration at the second event. David was supported by Cllr Derek Wilson, lead member for planning, and Chris Hilton, director of development and regeneration.

Chamber collaboration with Business Biscotti and Maidenhead Business Girls led to the formation of N3, a joint networking group which meets quarterly. All sessions have proved to be popular, resulting in good attendance. Working with Dignity (digital agency Chamber member), the Chamber organised a group of 15 businesses to attend a Google Adwords workshop at Google's headquarters in London.

I spoke on the panel at RBWM's STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Maths) Apprenticeship event and judged the area Young Enterprise event. RBWM, along with other training providers, are willing to team up with the Chamber to help employers understand apprenticeship advantages, particularly in light of the new levy. Workshops and information sessions will be planned over the coming quarters.

Finance

Bookkeeping has continued with the Donald Reid Group (DRG) for a token price having provided services without payment the previous year. DRG have greatly improved membership invoicing, working with the Membership and Operations and Process groups. Plans to automate subscriptions will likely result in an even smoother process. Our treasurer, Anthony Platt from Thames Bridge Accountancy, has also greatly aided steps towards more effective financial operations.

Membership

New membership benefits include cost reduction services from the Buying Support Agency (BSA) and news dissemination via the Chamber paper (chamberpaper.maidenhead.org.uk). Members save £495 + VAT annually on subscription fees and can reduce overheads following cost analysis by BSA. The Chamber paper publishes members tweets online. Member news can also be included in the general Chamber news bulletins.

A new cloud based CRM system has been employed. The membership process has been improved through utilisation of services from Thames Bridge Accountancy to maintain the CRM system. Members' status can now be easily tracked, viewed and reported on.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) – which help members effectively share knowledge and engage captive audiences - have continued to gain traction. The following Chamber SIG groups now exist:-

Hospitality SIG

International Trade SIG

Technology SIG

Small Business SIG

Digital Marketing SIG

Co Working SIG

Three Discovery Media Training SIG

The Hospitality SIG has run several meetings, attracting interest from well known local organisations. Having contacted the Head of the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys Programme, and met with the South East International Trade Advisor, I envisage the International Trade SIG holding meetings with influential MPs. Irrespective of Brexit, contacts, knowledge and “know how” will more likely open up new markets for your business. Join any of the SIGs as your interest and growth plans dictate.

Two members were assisted by the Chamber to setup highly targeted, invitation only events with local corporate companies. More such meetings can be facilitated in the future with willing members. Another new initiative will focus on enabling members to purchase, or sponsor, packaged “events slots” marketed via the Chamber for a special discounted price. Members will be able to use the sessions for education or training – for example, educate clients on best practise or deliver taster courses.

I hosted the Consul of New England in order to facilitate bilateral, international trade between Boston and the Maidenhead area. Facilitating inward investment will be a continuing theme throughout next year as will representing members concerns during Brexit negotiations.

News and Media

I gave two televised interviews when our MP, Theresa May, was selected as party leader and Prime Minister. The interviews raised the Chamber's profile and national appearance in The Times (commenting on the budget) provided another opportunity for the Chamber to speak in support of

the business community. The Chamber also organised other members to appear in the article, providing a platform for them to voice opinions directly and raise their visibility in the process.

Local media coverage in the Maidenhead Advertiser and the Ascot, Windsor & Eton Express has been excellent. Opportunities to produce a Chamber column have been fully neutralised as have requests for Chamber comment on several issues.

Social media platforms have been used to good effect with growing numbers of followers. Twitter now has over 1,200 followers, Facebook 443 and LinkedIn over 350. These platforms have been used to promote members, events and disseminate important news. The Chamber's email list has grown to 1,000.

Revamped, regular news and events bulletins have been welcomed by members and non members. Increased association with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and promotion by organisations featured at main Chamber events, have enhanced media coverage across several online platforms.

East Berkshire BCS (British Computer Society and Chartered Institute for IT) have agreed to advertise relevant Chamber events and I'm planning collaborative talks with the FSB East Berkshire and Thames Valley to explore mutually beneficial arrangements. Interaction with both organisations should extend the Chamber's reach.

Planning and Regeneration

Representations have been made throughout the year regarding the regeneration of Maidenhead and other planning concerns. As a key stakeholder, the Chamber submitted a response to the Borough Local Plan (BLP). Along with other executive members, I held private meetings with lead council members and RBWM executive directors to ensure business needs were expressed.

Maidenhead Town Partnership (MTP)

Support of MTP continued financially and throughout the year at board and strategy meetings. A key highlight involved a Chamber led petition against Sunday car parking charges, which forced an open council vote. The conclusion was a reversal in the car parking charges and a commitment from the council to not increase charges without full consultation.

The Chamber supported, and became a founding partner, of the new group, "Friends of Maidenhead" or FoM. This new, local volunteer community group was setup to help make the town

centre “be the best it can be”. A Chamber display in the FoM town centre shop was supported with physical presence on a number of Saturdays.

Planning and financial support for the Christmas lights event was sustained by the Chamber.

Operations and Processes

Working with the Finance and Membership groups, the Operations and Processes group continued to improve and streamline Chamber processes. Event attendees are now added to the CRM system and mailing lists automatically using the recommended double opt-in protocol. Executive terms of reference have been updated and work to introduce new member terms has been initiated.

Business Awards

The Maidenhead and Windsor Business Awards is a brand new, annual Chamber initiative that offers all sized businesses an opportunity to showcase themselves to the community. A perfect occasion to celebrate success, recognise employees and benchmark performance against competitors. The first awards ceremony will be held in September and compered by Adrian Moorhouse, the Olympic Gold swimmer.

As one of the most prestigious business events in the area, I encourage you all to enter the awards and attend the Awards Ceremony on 15 September. Visit <http://www.mwbusinessawards.com/> for details.

Notable Member Anniversaries & Celebrations

Congratulations to:-

- Banham Security who celebrated their 90th anniversary
- SD Displays and Goyals who celebrated 50 years in business
- Peter Sands who celebrated 50 years in business and 50 years on the Chamber executive

Many thanks to the active Chamber executive and other group members for their time and effort in helping move the Chamber forwards. Thanks to members for continuing to support the work of the Chamber. Please let me know if you'd like to join the executive team.

Olu Odeniyi
Chairman and President