PENRITH CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE

**MINUTES OF THE 111th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**HELD AT NORTH LAKES HOTEL, ON TUESDAY 3rd February 2015**

**Present:**

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| Alan Reading | J & J Grahams |
| Fiona Askins | Penrith Building Society |
| Amyn Fazal | Penrith Building Society |
| Helen Fazal | Proofreadextra |
| Anthony Penny | North Lakes Hotel |
| Cheryl Christian | Scott Duff & Co |
| Justin Wales | Penrith Bid |
| Kelvin Dixon | Penrith Bid/Seagraves & Dixon |
| Grahame Latus | Enterprise Answers |
| Heidi Marshall | Dodd & Co |
| John Bodger | 2030 Architects |
| Paul MarshallJohn Swainson | T.E. SwainsonT.E Swainson |
| Karen Harvey | Acorn Guest House |
| Nick Harvey | Acorn Guest House |
| Janet Madden | Furnishings & Frocks |
| Rob Winder | Burnett’s |
| Tracy Ellison | Burnett’s |
| Toni Hall | H & H Reeds Printers |
| Cilla Clarke | Eden Carers |
| Shirley Wells | Maggies Bakery |
| Maureen Whitemore | Whitemore & Thwaytes |
| Richard Tipping | Hedgehog Books |
| Liz Tipping | Hedgehog Books |
| John Clasper | Eden Housing Association |
| John Siddle | Sands |
| Richard Utting | Outgoing President |
| Glenn Clifford | Armstrong Watson |
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1. **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The 111th Annual general Meeting commenced at 6pm on the 3rd February 2015. President Richard Utting welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.

**2. Apologies**

Lisa Jackson- Ali Turnbull- Helen Little- Simon Veitch- Maggie Cormode- Phil Caton

1. **3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2014**

The minutes of the 110th Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 4th February 2014 were accepted as a true record of that meeting with an addition to the attendees of Kelvin Dixon who was not previously listed. Richard then signed the minutes with addition as a true record.

1. **4. Matters arising**

None.

**5.** **President’s report**

For those old enough to remember the Goons and their trademark song, ‘Now is the time to say goodbye.’

Having said that, hopefully you will not associate my final words as President, with me speaking like a goon, although some people would say I act like one at times.

Before I hand the chain of office over to our new President whoever that might, be I would like to say a few thankyou’s and cover a few points which I feel are important.

First of all, I wish to thank all those who have supported me in the 2 years of my presidency, especially the Executive and the Town Ambassadors.

It is almost unfair to mention people by name, as so many have given me support, but I would specifically like to thank Amyn for supporting me over the last 2 years, Fiona Askins, for superbly heading up the Ambassador group, and Heidi Marshall, for doing such a fantastic job with the Professional Group.

Thank you all very much.

Before I move onto more recent times, I would like to think back to where the Chamber was some 6 years ago and more. Amongst a number of things, there was poor attendance at meetings, a lack of interest, a lack of engagement and a lack of networking opportunities.

And that by the way, is not decrying the efforts put in by past presidents, far from it; as without them, this Chamber may have disappeared from sight or even been swallowed up by our county Chamber as has befallen other town Chambers. It has been, and continues to be, so important that we retain our own local independent Chamber, maintaining our position as the voice of local business covering local issues.

Over the past 6 years, the Chamber has definitely made continued progress, in rectifying all the negative points; with special mention to our efforts in engaging with the many great businesses, not only in the town centre, but also out on the industrial estates.

I would now like to briefly review what we have done, over the last two years of my presidency.

I will of course omit, my 3 month fact finding cruise of the world, funded by the Chamber.

I’m only joking of course……. it was only 2 months.

Before I cover the past 2 years, I would like to thank all the many businesses in Penrith, who have joined and supported our Chamber of Trade and it’s great to see many represented here this evening.

However I would also like to gently berate, all the businesses who have not joined us **yet.**

Of course we don’t employ a press gang or pressurise businesses to join, we just try to inform and encourage every business in Penrith, about the many positives of becoming part of the Chamber but also getting involved in those events and activities either organised or supported by the Chamber. However, there are many who don’t want to be involved, and others who, like the Ostrich, just put their head in the sand.

The Chamber cannot be the panacea for all the business ills of the town, it can only try and create an environment where businesses can flourish. It is up to businesses themselves to engage, get involved and hopefully improve their lot.

And it is not as if I want to ‘ostracise’ them; but we who are here tonight, know that it is not good for them and it is also not good for the town overall, as it is letting others down.

The town itself has a huge opportunity, to build on what we are already doing, we are at the Heart of Cumbria and we are in a prime location to take advantage of our position on the local map. We are in a great position to attract new business and expand existing businesses, to attract new employment opportunities especially for our young adults, too many of whom leave the area.

I hear from many, that Penrith suffers from not having any main attractions, how many times have I heard that Keswick has its Lake?

Well we might not have a small stretch of water but, what we do have, is a great market town, loved by those who visit, but it would seem unfortunately not so loved by many who live here.

For the former, we need to make Penrith an even greater place to visit; and for the latter, I would suggest that they should take a greater pride in what we have.

And making Penrith a better place can’t all be about a shopping experience, it needs to be much more than that, it needs to be about community and community spirit.

I had a dream and for those of you who were at the Annual Dinner in 2013, I created a picture of Devonshire Street, covered in a glass roof.

This was not because I thought a glass roof is what we should have, (although I think it is a good idea) but because we need to create a Penrith, which is different from other places, In my view why not create a town where people can walk freely in open pedestrianized spaces clear of the fear of being mowed down by the next lorry or bus or being gassed by the ever increasing pollutants of motor vehicles.

Of course there would be issues over parking and traffic flow but these are not unsurmountable.

What we need is a clear vision for the town. A vision which encompasses a need for economic development where businesses can thrive but which also provides both local people and visitors a sense of belonging and a sense of pride.

Turning to my term in office, I would like to think that I am leaving an organisation better fit for purpose but, still requiring some work.

There are things I set out to do that I haven’t achieved, we haven’t increased the membership as far as I would have liked, we haven’t engaged with the industrial estates as much as I would have liked and our engagement with the night time economy, has not been particularly successful.

However we have seen some notable ongoing successes:

The Town Ambassadors – an initiative which has created a really effective conduit between the Chamber and businesses in town. I can see that they and those who work with them will have a massive role to play in the development of the town going forward.

The Professional Group – I am amazed how well our professional sector has come together under the chairmanship of Heidi to discuss and share ideas and I can only see further developments which will benefit not only the Chamber but the town at large

Ever improving series of networking opportunities. May I refer in particular to our visits to Lakes Eggs and Traybakes which highlighted to me the many great businesses we have in and around the town.

Our involvement in the towns event programme, including the Winter Festival, Penrith on a Plate and the Winter Droving.

And our involvement in Totally Locally – may I congratulate Alan Reading on his hard work and dedication to the cause. What a brilliant way for independent businesses to promote themselves and compete with the nationals.

Our ongoing dialogue with Eden District Council. Despite those of you who despair with the council (and may I say that I am sometimes one of them) there are many good things which are going on in the background. My criticism is that they are not good at sharing their work with us and for this reason I have asked them just last evening to attend our meetings on a regular basis to give us updates on progress when it comes to business issues.

Our ever popular Annual Dinner and Business Awards evening.

The Pride in Penrith Lottery, which was the brain child of the Chamber and is now coming up to its 5th Anniversary in July, has now given out nearly £50,000 in grant aid, to local community groups and other organisations.

The Ask Me Points which will hopefully be extended this year, to include a Greeter scheme.

The Accommodation Group, which despite difficult beginnings, is now starting to get some momentum.

And looking forward, we are making progress with bringing a market back to the town and opening up the Beacon Pike, so it will be able to be seen from points across the town.

I am extremely proud to have been involved with anything that you deem successful over the past 2 years; and delighted to have served and worked with you.

If anything I have attempted hasn’t worked, blame my parents.

Thank you all so very much for not only supporting me but for being part of the business community of a town which I feel with vision, courage and an element of imagination can only go from strength to strength over the coming years.

Thank you.

**6. Treasurers Report provided by Helen Little**

**Penrith Chamber of Trade**

**Annual Report on the Accounts**

During the year ended 31 December 2014, the Chamber of Trade made a profit of £1,729 which means that the Chamber has now built up its reserves to £5,574.

It was our stated aim last year that we wanted the Chamber of Trade to have £5,000 in reserve, in case of emergency. Now that this target has been reached, we hope that future profits can be used to further the aims of the Chamber and benefit the members.

The Chamber’s profitability came from three areas:

1. Subscriptions
2. The Annual Dinner
3. The Winter Festival

Subscription income increased by £71 this year. The subscription income has not risen by as much as we would have hoped, this is due to a number of reasons:

1. When Helen Sanderson was secretary she was very good a chasing up members who had not paid their subscription. During this period the secretaries were Lizzie Barnes and Rosemary Lavender. As they were both secretaries for relatively short period, they never fully got a handle on debt. As a result less membership income was collected than we would have liked.
2. There was not as many new members as we would have liked. This is probably because the Chamber was not being promoted as effectively as before after Lisa resigned as marketing manager. The executive had expected Rosemary to start promoting the chamber to new members, however, the promotion part of her job took a back seat until she got to know more about the Chamber.

Despite the lack of new members the main part of the Chamber was profitable. (2014 – Profit of £1,095 and 2013 - loss of £355). The reason for this is because the marketing costs reduced by almost £1,600.

The annual dinner was a success again this year and contributed £1,066 to the profit of the Chamber.

Unfortunately, this year the winter festival has cost the Chamber £432. The reason that the festival was loss making was as a result of a main sponsor not paying us their sponsorship. We are continuing to chase this debt but feel it is prudent to provide against it.

At the end of the year the Chamber of Trade had £6,596 in its bank account compared to £3,754 in the previous year. I am pleased to report the Chamber is in a healthy position.

Helen Little

Treasurer

1. **7. Receive and Approve Accounts 31st December 2014**

Proposed Heidi Marshall Seconded Alan Reading

**8. Subscription Rates 2015/16**

Heidi Marshall informed the Chamber that discussions have taken place at the Executive Committee and it was felt that the current system of 3 rate bands based on the number of employees was unfair, particularly on those beginning new ventures and sole traders. The proposal from the Executive is to introduce a fairer pricing system for membership with more rate bands again based on the number of full time or equivalent part time employees.

Proposed

Sole Trader £40.00

1-3 Employees £55.00

4-9 Employees £75.00

10-25 Employees £110.00

25-50 Employees £150.00

Over 50 Employees £200.00

Maureen Whitemore suggested that new businesses could receive an introductory offer of a free years membership.

Amyn Fazal commented that this could be something the Executive could consider and discuss.

Heidi stated that with the proposed banding this would generate more income based on the current membership level and the services to be offered to be included in the membership fee are being increased once the introduction of the “Chamber Helpline” is fully up and running which is expected early February.

Proposed Heidi Marshall Seconded Amyn Fazal

**9. Any Amendments to the Constitution**

No amendments proposed

**Election of Officers**

# 10. President: Amyn Fazal

Proposed Maureen Whitemore Seconded Alan Reading

The Chain of Office was handed over and Amyn Fazal continued to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Incoming Presidents Speech

Good evening

It is customary for the incoming President to say a few words after election to lay out a bit of a stall.

First I’d like to tell you how delighted and honoured I am to have been elected as the representative voice of all Penrith’s businesses

I do not approach this role without a certain degree of trepidation. A role with huge responsibility and I hope clout amongst the stakeholders that impact on our town from local and national politicians, public opinion, business owners and workers and residents in general. I am the first to admit that the chamber represents an important BUT at the end of the day only one community voice.

I am also feeling trepidation because of who I have followed in my immediate predecessors Richard Utting and Philip Cranston and Kelvin Dixon before him. You all know how much the current success of the Chamber owes to Philip and Kelvin and under Richard, for the last 2 years, the chamber has gone from strength to strength. Those are huge acts to follow but I intend to make the best contribution I can and I promise to do my very best with your help and that of my newly elected executive team.

And on that point, I would like to say thank you for electing what is a superb executive team. Heidi Marshall my Vice President and who heads up the Professional Group, Fiona Askins runs the Ambassadors, Helen Little our financial fuehrer, Nick and Karen Harvey, Elizabeth Allinson. I intend to lead this team to help deliver what the chamber should be brilliant at.

So remember, the chamber exists to provide local businesses with practical and relevant support, a platform for businesses to engage, providing the opportunity for local businesses to network, and, give local businesses a strong voice in our community.

Being part of the Chamber gives businesses a voice that is heard and respected – help us to shape your future. Membership subs.

Moving on the future:

Richard Utting’s contribution will not be lost, we will use his skills as a consultant to help us with driving more membership and work on strategic longer term projects such as looking at the prospects for Pedestrianisation as part of the option for a better shopping and business experience in Penrith, Keswick to Penrith Railway, making a better show of some of our showpiece attractions like the castle and the beacon.

We will also continue with a programme of guest speakers-Rory Stewart is already lined up for the middle of the year.

We will once again be having the Stars of Business Awards at North Lakes Hotel-thank you Anthony Penny with an after dinner speaker and usual business awards-a really great annual event

We will also have our usual crop of social gatherings e.g. the summer social and B2B events and of course the general business meetings and forums to discuss issues of importance to the members.

In a minute you will hear from Kelvin and Justin from the Penrith Bid.

I have served on the BID board and have now made way for Heidi.

Here is a statement of intent, I am most passionate about the greatest opportunity that Penrith has had for a very long time to make an enormous leap forward with what is a very precious thing that has been created in the BID. Joined up thinking to achieve some really big things for the town and its objectives to be an even better place to live, work and play.

If there is nothing else that I can help make better, it’s this working together with BID to make some sound investment. Get together, be prepared to take responsibility and thank you again.

# 11. Vice President: Heidi Marshall

# Proposed Cheryl Christian Seconded Anthony Penney

# 12. Treasurer: Helen Little

Helen has confirmed she wishes to continue as treasurer

Proposed Heidi Marshall Seconded Shirley Wells

**13. Executives without Portfolio**

Fiona Askins- Ambassadors, Elizabeth Allinson- Retail, Nick/Karen Harvey- Accomodation

Proposed Maureen Whitemore Seconded Kelvin Dixon

Amyn Fazal suggested that the Chamber would benefit from further representation in the retail sector and welcomes any further interest in the Executive team.

Alan Reading will be co-opted onto the Executive to represent Totally Locally.

**14. Any Other Business**

Ali Turnbull sent her thanks to all who helped with the WW1 commemorations throughout the town and Amyn in turn thanked Ali for all her hard work on a wonderful event.

Richard Utting thanked Anthony Penney on behalf of the Chamber for all the support the North Lakes have provided over the last year providing a free meeting venue, the highly successful annual dinner and of course for tonight.

**Presentation**

Kelvin Dixon and Justin Wales of Penrith BID provided the Chamber with a very informative presentation on the new structure of BID and how the different agencies in Penrith propose to work together in the coming months and in the future. Justin introduced the Board through the presentation and demonstrated how businesses can utilise in particular the Discover Penrith Website for benefit.

Amyn Fazal thanked both Kelvin and Justin and closed the meeting with some thoughts and a starter for ten:

Amyn asked the Chamber members to think about some iconic streets for example St Andrews or Angel Lane. Picture how good they look now and how we can make the whole town welcoming and attractive.

Penrith needs a vision the Chamber can present proposals and project plans will be developed from this.

Thinking about the main points of entry to the town how can we make them look so appealing that people want to pull off those main roundabouts and come into the town.

Think about coming together as a business community to create joint ventures around calendar dates with accommodation, restaurant and shop packages.

Amyn thanked everyone for attending and their ongoing support.

**Dates for your Diary**

None at time of AGM

The meeting closed at 7.15pm

President

Amyn Fazal …………………………………………………….. Date February 2016