

Director's Report, July 2020

Annual General Meeting



Overview

Membership up by 58

Support for businesses strong

Lobbying and engagement very active

Events programme relaunched

Finances healthy



Momentum around the broad and varied areas of activity which come under Chamber's umbrella has gathered pace during the past 12 months. As a litmus test of successful engagement in our community, we monitor membership levels and I am delighted to announce that 58 new members have joined. We are also in a financially healthy position even with the substantial effect of the Covid lockdown on events and sponsorship income.

The organisation has continued to build on the effectiveness of its reshape under Barrie Baxter's leadership for the past two years and the 12 months have seen extremely high levels of engagement with the membership, industry sectors, business in general and many States departments and officials.

Chamber can be proud of its reach and the respect it has garnered in many quarters and that is the result of a cohesive team effort involving a huge number of volunteers and the Office team.

Our relationship with the decision makers in the state sector is a crucial part of Chamber's existence as it enables us to present and discuss matters of consequence to our members and the island community.

We have taken part in a range of consultations and met many States officers and politicians in the past 12 months, particularly during lockdown when weekly (at times, daily) updates were held.

That platform is set to further develop as we are involved in high level decision making around the proposed economic enablers to help our island post lockdown and I welcome Elaine Gray's respected involvement in those round-table discussions with the States' teams.

Having achieved the relocation, rebrand and restructure in recent years, I am very mindful that momentum needs to continue on all levels, not least our financial position and am happy to report that, in spite of lost income around Covid, we are "in the black" and well placed to go forward, which is a challenge not always overcome in Chamber's history.

The events programme has been relaunched, including the popular OGH monthly lunch, which has sold out for July, and a new Coffee Club initiative with 50 participants. The popular Lunch&Learn series will also restart soon and we continue to enjoy a high number of drop-ins for business support and general engagement.

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Sponsorship is an essential part of all of this and I am grateful to HSBC, Barclays, Sure and a host of other organisations for their support. We are also fortunate to have the expertise and input of Diane de Garis and deGaris Accounting at board level. The 470-strong Annual Dinner was, once again, a highlight of the island's calendar and demand is already building for the next! We were able to donate £6,000 to charity and still make a profit, which I hope you agree is a good outcome. Part of the reason for this is that all organisation is done in-house so does not incur fees.

Communication is essential for our membership organisation. We have been active with more than 70 media interviews and statements, both published and broadcast, during the past 12 months, coupled with 72 pages of our own content in Business Brief and 96 pages in our own magazine, Contact. The free BB content alone is worth £43,000 at paid rate and all of this produced in-house, as is Contact. The revenue from our magazine is growing, whereas in the past Chamber has paid £6,000 per annum to have it produced. The most important part of these avenues is that we can reach every part of our business community and the island as a whole with unedited content and messaging - although the income is obviously also very welcome!

The Industry Group framework has been invaluable for expert insight and feedback on everything from planning, tourism, entrepreneurship and energy to blue economy and was especially effective during lockdown and I would like to sincerely thank all of those Heads and group members (who total more than 200) for their input and activity. Going forward, Chamber will look to make this forum even more agile and effective.

We have also engaged more frequently with the G4 and intend to build on that connection as a cohesive voice for island business and beyond. The planned organisational review, as part of Elaine's focus, is an important step in continuing to ensure that Chamber is effective and fit for purpose. We are also delighted that Exec will have new members, to complement the existing team, going forward.

As part of future development, we will be building on our outward-looking initiatives with the UK, France, Czech Republic, Isle of Man and beyond. This is likely

to have a double positive of identifying business opportunities for organisations here and raising Guernsey's profile widely to try to attract enterprising new residents, with the associated economic benefit for our island. Moves to develop the Blue Economy hold particular potential on that level.

The Business Development Centre is growing in use and we hope that improvements to the space to make it fit for rented use can be investigated now that finances are strong. Some 60 events have been held during the 12 months involving several thousand islanders. As a team of just three employees at Chamber HQ (one of whom is freelance), I would like to thank Lauren Ridgwell for her endless hard work and enthusiasm - together with superb photography and the very popular Chamber creative competition she devised and ran.

If Chamber wishes to further develop, the organisation must review resources as these are currently under strain. As a registered Not For Profit with an important role in our community, we need to focus on having the staff time, resources and appropriate fabric of the space rather than being profit driven, although we will always be mindful of effective and efficient operation.

Among the topics under consideration for the next 12 months are:

Chamber's involvement in a Queen's Award for Business event in partnership with His Excellency, the Lieut Governor

Accreditation of our business support events as part of CIPD

An aim of taking the membership beyond 700 organisations

The regular use of virtual engagement with event attendance to ensure continuation through any future Covid effects

High level engagement with the States senior team to achieve "quick wins" around the Revive&Thrive policy document

**Kay Leslie,
Chamber Executive Director**