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AGM and the new Council

The Chamber held its Annual General Meeting on the 29th October, and some forty or so Chamber members attended. The meeting was preceded by a presentation by the SHDA Managing Director, Ms Linda Houston (see later in this issue), and the normal proceedings of the AGM followed, rounded off by tea and snacks.

As a result of the increased membership numbers, and therefore an increased ability to exert effort on behalf of the private sector, the new Council has been strengthened to a total of 12 Council members, including officials.

The officials are:

President: Mr John Styles
Vice President: Mr Paul Hickling
Secretary/Treasurer: Mr Stuart Moors

Foreword from the President

Welcome to this, our first edition of "Chamber Business" for 2008.

Last year (2007) was a good year for the Chamber. We have significantly increased our influence with SHG, having regular dialogue with senior officials and EXCO. We are also represented on the Outsourcing Steering Committee and the new National Development Forum (NDF) which will provide strategic input into the formulation of strategies and policies. The Chamber will ensure that the interests of the Private Sector, and particularly of its members, are properly represented on these bodies. Regular feedback to Chamber members will be given.

Last year also saw a massive increase in the number of Chamber members. We now have a total of 51 members which is, by far, the highest number we have ever had. Indeed, counting the number of employees in each member company, over 90% of the private sector workforce work for Chamber members! The Chamber Council has also increased in

size which will enable it to do more for the membership.

This year promises to be the most important yet. The big decision will be whether or not the two bids for the design, building and operation of the airport are compliant and affordable. So, we will finally know whether or not air access will be coming to St Helena. A decision will also have to be made on the new shipping schedule beyond 2009. We also look forward to more public services being outsourced in to the Private Sector.

So, a challenging year ahead, hopefully full of opportunities for local business. A happy and Prosperous new year to you all.

John Styles, President



"Could we discuss this in simpler terms? What do you mean by 'me' and 'work' and 'more'?"

Presentation by SHDA's Linda Houston

Preceding the AGM in October, the newly appointed Managing Director of the St. Helena Development Agency, Ms Linda Houston, gave a short presentation on "The Development of a sustainable and vibrant economy", subtitled "The Private Sector Challenge".

In it, she listed some of the issues for private sector development focusing on the danger of not being pro-active, so that others from off-island may reap the rewards of an entrepreneurial spirit. The way to retain a fair share of the rewards for St.Helena is to plan ahead, aim for quality products and services, and to be flexible in business models which include joint ventures and collaborative arrangements.

She wound up her presentation with the note: "No guts, no glory!"

Fuel prices

At the AGM, the members discussed the recent SHG announcement of rises in the pump prices paid for motor fuel. With the extreme discrepancy between petrol and diesel price rises, there was the feeling that the whole story was being hidden from the consumer, and the new Council resolved to address the issue by pressing the Castle for more detail. A letter was sent to the Acting Financial Secretary, Mrs Christine Turpin, and her reply was forthcoming within the week. However, the Council felt that the reply was disappointing as it did nothing to throw any light on the matter, simply resorting instead to claims of confidentiality.

The Council followed this up with the Governor when he met the Council, and will be progressing it further until a satisfactory



resolution is reached. Any future details will be made public to all Members.

CoC Working Groups

Having a large number of committed people on the Council has allowed us the opportunity to carry out a complete review of how the Chamber works and the services we offer our members.

We have agreed that we will work in small groups, Working Parties or Working Groups, to tackle specific tasks as and when they arise. They will take the views of the full Council and members with a specific interest in the subject, devise a proposal, and then bring this back to the full Council for review and agreement.

In some cases the Working Party may go on to manage the implementation of the decision; in others, it will be disbanded.

A Working Party can contain non-Council members if the individuals concerned have a relevant specialist skill or knowledge.

So far 3 Working Parties have been set up;

1. The Constitution Review Group, which, as the name suggests is reviewing the Chamber's constitution to ensure it meets the present needs of our members.
2. The Member Services Working Party is identifying a comprehensive package of services which our Chamber will offer its members, by looking at the services offered by other Chambers world wide.
3. Options for improving leverage and lobbying mechanisms. The Chamber Council is the only elected body representing all sectors of the business community; this puts the Chamber in an excellent position to lobby in the interests of business.

If you have any concern you wish raised at Council, please contact one of Council members, or email the Secretary on CofCommerce@cwimail.sh

Communications

At the Council meeting in early January, it was decided to publish this newsletter via the local press. We will be aiming to publish it every 2 months or so, although this might be altered to suit circumstances.

In addition, we have decided to publish minutes of the Council minutes to all members. Because of the cost of printing and delivery, we will only actively send the minutes to any member that has an email address. A printed copy can be picked up from the Secretary, however.

Please note: All members are always welcome to sit in on Council meetings. In general, we hold a meeting on the first Tuesday of each month, at 4.30pm in the Jamestown Community Centre. We will also try to announce meetings to members by email.

Next meeting: 5th February 2008

Please note our new email address: CofCommerce@cwimail.sh