

meetings...! Our Chamber is so fortunate to have a CEO at the helm with such drive, tenacity, and rooted passion for this county. Jo – thank you for everything you do for Kent; thank you for allowing me to experience a different side of Kent business life and for introducing me to your brilliant team. I will continue to support you all as the Chamber moves onwards and upwards. There are many fantastic activities that the Chamber has delivered this past year, too many to explore in the short time I have today. So, I'd like to indulge you in just a couple that personally stood out for me and illustrate the diversity of what Chamber does. My first example, and if you know what I do for a day job, won't be a big surprise – Yours, mine, our collective workforce (people) is our biggest and arguably most important asset. Therefore, it's fantastic that the Chamber has been appointed by the Government to define YOUR workforce skills gaps in the development of the Kent & Medway Skills Improvement Plan. This is a significant piece of work that puts Kent business at the heart of defining local skills needs for now and the future. Over the next 3 years the Chamber needs to hear from YOU in order to provide an evidence base that informs education providers on what provision needs to be adapted or created to meet your collective needs. The Chamber is ahead of the game in this space, thanks to a successful pilot last year, which resulted in one of the first published Local Skills Improvement Plans in the country. If you haven't seen it, take a look on the Chamber website. I expect you'll be seeing a lot of Lucy over the next couple of years as she leads on this activity, so watch out for the engagement events and sector networks and GET INVOLVED and HAVE YOUR SAY. And...while you're waiting for one of those opportunities to engage in the specifics, the Chamber needs your help right now! The Winter Skills Survey is now live, so head to the Chamber Social Media Channels or zap on one of the QR codes around the room. This is a great opportunity for us all and I look forward to seeing how this all develops. My second example is probably something we all take for granted (I know I do) and that is the Chamber Business Awards. Undoubtedly the highlight of the event calendar for many and a chance to really celebrate the best of Kent business. Last year was the largest and arguably the most successful yet, and it's set to get even grander this year! I am sure you are all aware, that following many successful years, Kent County Council, in partnership with the KM, are no longer running the KEIBA awards, instead they are putting their support behind the Chamber Awards to create a single countywide celebration of what's great about Kent business. This is yet another example of how your Chamber leads by example in collaboration. Before I go, I would like to take a short moment to also thank the board of this Chamber. If you have not taken the time to learn more about the people who sit on the board, I urge you to visit the website and read the biographies. This is a board jam packed with talent – it's represented by folk from finance, law, communication, education, public service, HR, commerce, and whole lot of life experience. They are dedicated professionals who are truly batting for the members – thank you, thank you. So finally, I would like to thank you one last time for your continued support as members of this outstanding Chamber; to encourage you to continue to share your business journeys with us; to engage, collaborate and encourage each other. I wish you all a healthy and happy 2023.

4. Annual Report and Accounts:

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022 have been approved by the Board and confirmed by the Auditor.

Adoption of Accounts

Proposed: Tim Sheppard **Seconded:** Graham Card **Vote:** Carried

5. Directors

5.1 Since the last AGM, the following Members have resigned as Directors on the Board:
There have been no resignations since the last AGM

5.2 The following Members will continue for the second year of their elected term:
Ray Johnson, Luke Quilter

5.3 The following Members will continue for the third year of their elected term:
Jo James, Carole Barron, Tim Allen, Richard Lavender, Andrew Metcalf, Richard Hicks,
John Keefe, Stuart Whorlow, Nick Hawley

5.4 The following Members have completed the third year of their elected term and,
being eligible, offer themselves for re-election:
Chris Hare, Miranda Chapman, Tracey Kerly, Joanna Worby

Proposed: Tim Sheppard **Seconded:** Richard Stafford

5.5 The following Members have been co-opted during the year and being eligible, offer
themselves for election:

No-one was co-opted on during the year.

5.6 Nominations

There have been no nominations received.

6. Election of President

Richard Lavender will continue as President for the coming year and Carole Barron will
remain as Honorary President for the coming year.

7. Appointment of Auditor

The Board have appointed Azets (Wilkins Kennedy) to continue as Auditors for the
year 2023/2024

8. Fixing of Auditor's Remuneration

The Chairman asked for authorisation for the Board to fix the Auditors fees.

Proposed: Kenton May **Seconded:** Cheryl Causebrook **Vote:** Carried

9. Any other business

Special Resolution to approve the amended Articles of Memorandum

The amended Articles of Memorandum had been sent out to the Members prior to
the AGM. The Chairman asked if anyone had any questions or queries regarding the
amendments – there were none.

Proposed: Heather Nowak **Seconded:** Debra Green **Vote:** Carried

The Chairman then handed over to the CEO for an update.

10. Chief Executive Update

As Chris mentioned, I have decided after 33 years at the Chamber, with 15 of
those being your Chief Executive, I have decided to retire at the end of the
year, not an easy decision to come to, but one I feel is right for me and my
family. You can spend all your life planning and saving for retirement but there
has to come a time when you start to live and enjoy it, and I've decided that for
me that will be at the end of 2023.

What will I do with myself, no idea, but I certainly like the idea of doing what I want to do, when I want to do it, and not have to work around schedules and diaries.

Having made the decision and told the Board, it has made me reflect on the past 33 years and the Chamber we are today, it bears no resemblance to the one I joined back in 1990, working 12 hours a week as typist. I've always had a vivid imagination, but not even in my wildest dreams, did I ever think I would be here today, running the the largest Chambers in the South East, in fact I would even say, one of the most active in the UK, but here I am.

When I first started there was four of us part time, including a part time chief executive, today we have 37 staff, our turnover was less than £100k in 1990 and today its £2.4 million.

The Chamber team, its board , committee members, and of course you our members, have worked collectively to make Kent Invicta the leading support organisation in the County and the respected business voice not just locally, but regionally and nationally.

The past few years have been very challenging for us, the same as they have for you all. Firstly, we had the pandemic to get through, finally thinking we were back on our feet, we are now facing the ramifications of high inflation, soaring prices and struggling to find the people we need to help us move forward.

That said, the past 12 months the Chamber has not stood still, we have stepped up our lobbying on your behalf, ensuring your voice is heard in government on a variety of areas like post Brexit trade deals, labour shortage, soar inflation, energy support through to skills.

We have championed much needed infrastructure to ensure long term economic growth, particularly expansion at Gatwick and the Lower Thames Crossing and of course, you can't talk about infrastructure without mentioning operation brock. I must say one of the benefits of retiring is I will never have to talk about the M20 again.

Chris mentioned our business awards, they certainly were a great success last year and Neil and his team have delivered over 120 successful business events over the past year, with the majority being free to members, so really enhancing the offering to you, our members.

Our international department, has not had an easy time, with continual changes to the paperwork requirements for cross border trade, but they have been very supportive to members both with their export documentation and the customs declarations, I believe they have issued around 6,000 documents in the past year.

Our business support team through various contracts have supported thousands of Kent businesses. Through the Kent & Medway growth hub they have assisted over 1600; through the enhance business support programme they have given 75 businesses 36 hours of intensive scale up support, which led to them taking on more local supply chains benefiting another 83 Kent businesses. In total through the scale up programme these businesses have collectively increased their revenue by £10m and invested over £2m into their businesses. There are many other government programmes that they have successfully delivered on.

I could go on, as there have been many achievements but I will leave it there, as I can hear some rumbling stomachs, actually, it's mine, the sandwiches are definitely calling out to me. After lunch, I hope you will all join me for a session looking at the future. We certainly have a changing landscape and we need to ensure your chamber remains relevant to you and your business and it would be great to hear from you, what it is you need us to be doing to help support your business growth.

So finally, from me, at my last Chamber AGM, as this time next year, I will be one of those economically inactive people the government keeping talking about, but I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all of you for being such active members and engaging members, and of course, my thanks have to go to the amazing chamber team and Board of Directors, who have made my job, such an amazing and enjoyable one.

11. Vote of thanks

The vote of thanks was given by Tim Sheppard of Smart Support.

Tim said that we are losing a fantastic person from the Chamber and everyone will have to step up to the plate – he asked for a round of applause for Jo.

Tim then thanked membership, businesses, the Board and staff for representing businesses and giving us a voice.

CH told the members that lunch was now served and they were welcome to come back in about 45 minutes to join Jo in looking at the future of the Chamber.