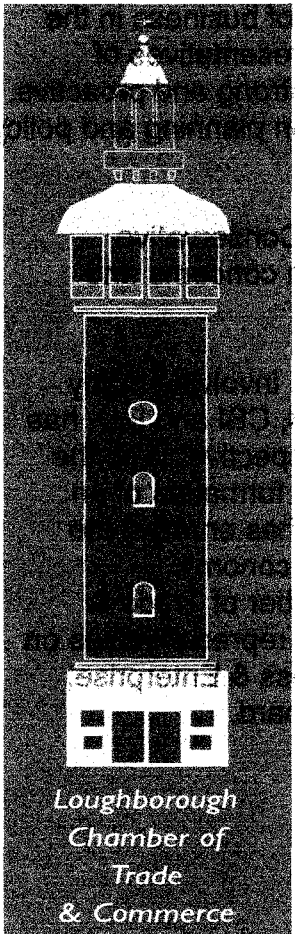


# LOUGHBOROUGH CHAMBER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE

## PRESIDENTS REPORT 2008/09



March 2009

## **Overview**

I am pleased to present my annual report covering our activities and events for 2008/09.

This year the Chamber has been looking at how it can increase engagement with members, grow the membership and enhance its external profile. We are acting to make use of the monthly meetings for more interaction between members and sharing of common interest information. We already benefit from the attendance at meetings of representatives from Charnwood Borough Council and invaluable input from Jon Walker around the strategic plans for Loughborough University. It would be a real bonus if members could come forward to share knowledge on their areas of business and expertise which could prove beneficial to others. Some possible areas, which I am sure would interest colleagues, could be employment law, Health & Safety, current business legislation. We would also welcome any inputs on opportunities to promote Loughborough.

It must be emphasised that this approach in no way diminishes the intention of the Chamber to continue to build on its links and influence with key groups in the town through both involvement in strategy committees and direct discussions on specific subjects key to the development of business in the town. The relationship with both officers and elected representatives of Charnwood Borough Council is highly prized, has been strong and proactive, and has helped retain our position as prime consultees on planning and policy matters.

During the year we met with Nicky Morgan, prospective Conservative candidate for Loughborough, at which we discussed both concerns and potential opportunities for Loughborough.

The forming of Leicester Shire Business Council (LSBC), involving many business groups including Chambers of Commerce, FSB, CBI and IoD, has enabled a unified input from a county wide business perspective. With the adoption of the Leicestershire Multi Area Agreement and formation of an Economic Development Company this unified approach has enabled the LSBC to be recognised as the business partner for this economic regeneration initiative. Members of Loughborough Chamber of Trade & Commerce are actively involved and, through LSBC, are representatives on several of the strategy & policy groups, including, Business & Enterprise, Housing Planning & Infrastructure and the Leadership Board.

## **Main Issues**

This year the Chamber has been actively involved in supporting actions to improve the Town and has made representations on several issues, the main ones of which are outlined below.

### **1. Hospital Site – Baxter Gate**

Following the refusal of the original planning application Domain appealed and the matter was reviewed by a government planning inspector. She endorsed the decision to refuse the application.

Domain subsequently resubmitted an amended application. We made it clear to both Domain and Charnwood Planning Department that in our view the revisions represented minor concessions and in no way addressed the real issues relating to the limited mix of use, lack of active frontages and that the insular nature of the development would sterilise a key development opportunity area in the town.

The revised application was again turned down by Charnwood Borough as was another appeal referred to a different planning inspector.

Although we support the planning decisions taken it is recognised that the need for a suitable development on this site is critical and we will remain open to working with interested parties, including the developer, if willing, in order to help achieve a viable solution.

### **2. Public Realm**

Proposals for improvements to the public highways and pedestrianised areas of the town centre, developed by consultants working for CBC, were reviewed by our representatives on the Town Team. Although the intent to improve the overall image of the town centre was welcome there were a number of concerns, particularly around parking and service delivery provision in the Wards End/Bedford Square area. This together with other feedback was given to CBC and a revised scheme is due to be presented on 31<sup>st</sup> March for consideration prior to it being put to CBC Cabinet for approval.

### **3. Town Centre Management**

The importance of a vibrant town centre to the ongoing success of Loughborough has always been recognised and is even more relevant in the current economic climate. To achieve this good town centre management is vital. At an operational level the Town Centre Partnership, which the Chamber was instrumental in establishing, has been very successful having led the way in organising promotional events including a busy Christmas schedule.

It is recognised, however, that work on promotion of Loughborough and attracting inward investment is also a key factor in any successful town centre management plan.

To this end we have been active in working with CBC and other parties to identify ways to promote Loughborough with potential retailers as well as further opportunities to improve the town image.

## **Committees**

- Charnwood Community Safety Partnership
- CCTV
- Town Team
- Town Centre Partnership
- Fair Trade Steering Group
- Charnwood Together
- East Midlands Airport Consultative committee

Members continue to actively represent the Chamber and feedback relevant issues to the Members Monthly Meeting.

## **Events**

I have listed some of the events organised on behalf of the members and also others to which we have been invited.

**Annual Cocktail Evening** – The event held at The Priory Hotel was extremely popular with in excess of 80 attendees. As well as Chamber members there were colleagues from Leicestershire Chamber and guests from Charnwood Borough, Loughborough University, Leicestershire Constabulary and several non-member businesses from the town. A cheque for £250 was presented to Rainbows.

**Day at the Races** – Held at Southall and enjoyed by all those who attended. Thanks go to Alvin Bayliss who organised the event.

**Annual Dinner Dance** – Once again held at the Carillion Rooms, a thoroughly enjoyable evening for members and their guests. Over £300 was raised for Rainbows through some lively games organised by Pat Brookes and Audrie Smallman.

**Leicestershire Chamber Annual Luncheon** – A well attended event where Chamber representatives and other attendees were entertained by Tom O'Connor.

**Christmas Meal** – This year was held at the Priory Hotel and was well attended. A very good meal and excellent company.

I represented the Chamber at the Remembrance Sunday service and was proud to lay a wreath on our behalf.

## **Membership**

I am delighted to welcome several new members this year. As previously stated it is important that we strive to improve our communication and engagement with our members, we also need to promote and raise awareness of the benefits of membership, the positive contributions made by the Chamber and the benefits to the business community of supporting these activities.

## **Thanks**

My grateful thanks to the members of the Chamber for the support given over the last year, it would not be possible for us to engage and influence across the wide range of areas previously identified without the time and hard work given by committee members to ensure the Chamber remains at the forefront on business issues.

The Chamber is proud of its continued strong working relationships with both Charnwood Borough Council and Loughborough University and is indebted to Jonathan Hale (CBC) and Jon Walker (University) for their continued support and contributions.

We acknowledge the support provided by Ramada Hotel in allowing us to use their facilities for Members Monthly Meetings. Our very grateful thanks go to the Staff and Directors of the Ramada and hope the relationship will continue well into the future.

## **Summary**

Over the past year the Chamber can take pride in its contribution, particularly the positive approach to working in partnership with others for the overall benefit of Loughborough and its business community. A key to building on this for the future will be for us to increase and broaden the range of membership to ensure we can bring the widest possible business perspective to support our activities.

Brian McInnes  
March 2009