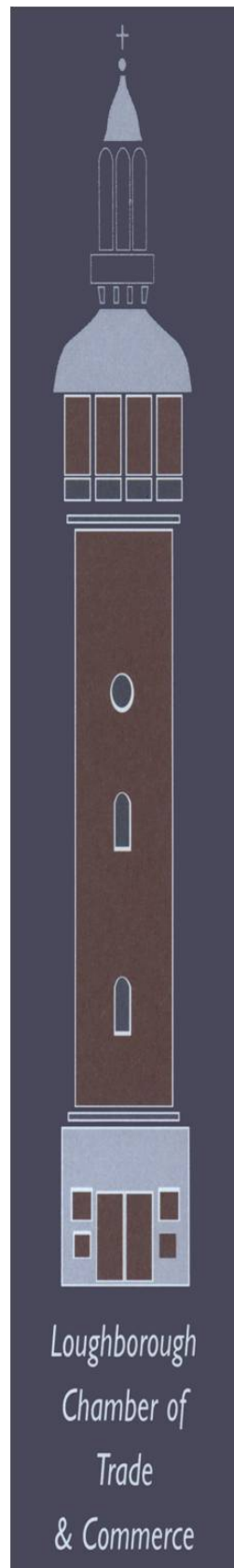


Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2009/ 2010

MARCH 2010



Overview

I am pleased to present my annual report covering our activities and events for 2009/10.

Following a review in 2008 of how the Chamber could increase engagement with members, grow the membership and enhance its external profile, we have experimented with new formats in our monthly meetings. This has resulted in more interaction between members and a better sharing of common interest information. Whilst making these changes, we have been conscious of the need to maintain our local influence. We continue to 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. In 2009 we have also benefitted from members coming forward to share knowledge on their areas of business and expertise. This has resulted in a highly informative session on employment law as well as a useful session on self-management. We would be grateful if further members would be prepared to speak or input to meetings on their specialist subjects. Some further areas, which I am sure would interest colleagues, could be Health & Safety, current business legislation, managing recruitment and marketing. 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 2009, the new web-site was commissioned and launched. www.loughboroughchamber.co.uk is now a much improved tool for keeping members and stakeholders informed. With the support of members through sponsorship and enhanced listings, we hope that the costs of the new site will be recovered over the next 2 years.

In January 2010, members voted to elect former Chamber Presidents Jim Harkness and Mike Smallman as Honorary Members as a mark of gratitude for their long-standing support of the Chamber.

Our February 2010 meeting was a particular highlight of the year when the prospective parliamentary candidates for the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, Nicky Morgan and Mike Willis attended our "Business Hustings" – unfortunately Andy Reed declined to attend. Nicky and Mike both gave short speeches outlining policy ambitions for business and then took questions from the floor. With an excellent turn-out of members and invited guests, there followed a lively interaction which gave Nicky and Mike an excellent insight into the issues which Loughborough Business is looking to the next Government to address.

Involvement in 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 planning applications, review and refusals, there appears to be a stalemate at present on this site. Although we support the planning decisions taken it is recognised that the need for a suitable development on this site is critical and we remain open to working with interested parties, including the developer, if willing, in order to help achieve a viable solution.

2. Public Realm

Following our feedback and review through representation on the Town Team, a revised scheme was approved in late March 2009. Since March 2009, funding constraints have led to further revisions in the pace of change.

3. Eastern Gateway

The Chamber is delighted that the Eastern Gateway project is fully funded and work has now started. This development will make a substantial improvement to the accessibility of Loughborough as a business destination in addition to the quality of life improvements for Loughborough residents in the vicinity of the Station.

4. 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 Members Monthly Meetings.

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 70 attendees. The chamber was pleased to be joined by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire, Jennifer Lady Gretton, and by The Worshipful The Mayor of Charnwood, Councillor Roy Brown and the Mayoress, Mrs. Gillian Brown. 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 Charnwood Borough Council Mayor's Appeal.

Annual Dinner Dance - Once again held at the Carillion Rooms, a thoroughly enjoyable evening for members and their guests. £350 was raised for charity through some lively games organised by Pat Brookes and Alvin Bailiss. Money raised at the 2008 event was donated to Rainbows. The £350 raised at the 2009 event will be donated to Glebe House.

Leicestershire Chamber Annual Luncheon -A well attended event where Chamber representatives and other attendees were entertained by Sandi Togsvig.

Christmas Meal - This year was held at the Priory Hotel and was well attended. An excellent meal and good company.

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

Plans for 2010

The Chamber is collaborating with LATI to promote the Loughborough Business Showcase on 18th May 2010. We are grateful to AstraZeneca, Future Energy Performance, Imago and Quiet Storm Solutions for their support in making this event financially viable. We are also grateful to Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce for supporting us by providing a booking and administration service for this event, as well as promoting it to their membership. Meet the Buyer appointments will be available to book with: Charnwood Borough Council, Loughborough University and Leicestershire Police. I hope that members will take full advantage of this initiative to promote Loughborough as a great place to do business.

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 in my first year as President. 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 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.

Paul Fileman
March 2010