

**THE REPORT OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE
LOUGHBOROUGH CHAMBER OF
TRADE AND COMMERCE
2007/08**

March 2008

Overview

I am pleased to present my annual report covering our events and more significant activities for 2007/08.

This year the Chamber has continued to build on its links 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 has been strong and proactive, and has helped retain our position as prime consultees on planning and policy matters.

The Executive Committee have benefited from the attendance at meetings of representatives from CBC to discuss matters ranging from regeneration to climate change and business engagement. In addition there has been invaluable input from Jon Walker around the strategic plans for Loughborough University and their relationship with the town.

During the year we had separate meetings with Andy Reed MP and Nicky Morgan, prospective Conservative candidate for Loughborough, at which we discussed both concerns and potential opportunities for Loughborough.

Through the Presidents Policy Committee, chaired by Leicestershire Chamber, and involving other local Chambers and business representative bodies, we have been discussing areas of common interest. A mechanism for using this group to present a unified business input on countywide issues is being considered.

Main Issues

The Chamber has made representations on many issues this year and below are some of the main ones.

1. Car Parking

The Chamber has been leading the campaign for improvements to car parking facilities and operating regimes for a number of years. Following the consultants report on strategic parking, this year saw the adoption of pay-on-foot parking at the Beehive Lane car park, for which we commend the council. We will continue to press for extension of this operation to other facilities in the town as well as adoption of the other recommendations of the report that will support business in the town centre.

2. Town team

The new Town Centre Masterplan has been adopted by the Council. The Chamber input has been core to creating an outcome that will inform future development strategy.

3. Hospital Site – Baxter Gate

The proposal to build a student enclave with 603 beds has caused grave concern across a wide spectrum of interested parties in the town.

We have always made clear that the University and its students are a key part of the character of Loughborough and to this end have supported several student accommodation proposals which were sympathetic to the overall character of the town centre.

However, we opposed the Baxter Gate proposal, believing it to be unsuitable, as currently presented, on several grounds not least that it will sterilise a key development opportunity area in the town.

Although the original application was refused, the matter has now gone to appeal and an inspector is currently reviewing the planning decision. Whatever the outcome we will be open to continue to work with interested parties, including the developer if willing, in order to help achieve a viable solution.

4. The Town Centre Partnership

Established in 2006, with the Chamber as founding members, this has proved highly successful in developing events to promote the town centre offering. It has been generally acknowledged that the last Christmas was a great success and this could be significantly attributed to the organisation and events arranged by the Town Centre Partnership.

5. Inner Relief Road

Progress has occurred on funding and planning with a start targeted for 2009. Once implemented this will enable progress to be made on improvements to the town centre including pedestrianisation of the High Street.

Committees

1. Charnwood Community Safety Partnership

This has covered several areas of concern, recently that of delinquency and general behaviour in and around the town has been raised. We continue to be very active in support of this group.

2. CCTV

Use of CCTV has continued to grow and where implemented has contributed to a number of arrests and created a greater sense of

security for residents. The headquarters for CCTV has now moved to Victoria Place.

3. Fair Trade Steering Group

This continues to contribute to retaining the Fair Trade status gained last year.

4. Charnwood Together

The Strategic Partnership will be a key contributor to generation and implementation of policy in the Borough. It is currently focused on developing the local area agreement and the Leicestershire sustainable community strategy. Both these will eventually have a massive impact on the delivery of services in the local area. We are also represented on a number of the sub-committees, including Economic Growth and Climate Change. It is important that we continue to influence within the Partnership.

5. East Midlands Airport Consultative committee

The airport is a significant factor in the local economy and it is important that we support this working relationship.

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 Party – A well attended event including colleagues from Leicestershire Chamber and guests from Charnwood Borough, Loughborough University and the Students Union. A cheque for £250 was presented to the Mayor's charity.

Loughborough Chamber Golf Day – Held at Longcliffe, the day was enjoyed by all and well supported by teams representing member companies, which bodes well for this becoming a permanent fixture in the Chamber calendar of events.

Video Race Evening – Held at the Ramada Hotel this thoroughly enjoyable and lively evening was arranged by Alvin Bayliss.

Annual Dinner Dance – Once again held at the Carillion Rooms, members and their guests acknowledged the event as excellent and entertaining. £1000 was collected for the Rainbows charity, which will be presented ahead of the AGM.

Leicestershire Chamber Annual Luncheon – A well attended event were Chamber representatives and other attendees were entertained by Jim Bowen.

Executive Committee Christmas Meal – This year held at the Laughing Buddha and attended by 20 members and guests.

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. It is important that we strive to improve our communication and engagement with our members, making better use of e-mail and website. 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 Executive Committee for the support given over the last year, it would not be possible for the Chamber 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 committee meetings. Our very grateful thanks go to the Staff and Directors of the Ramada and hope the relationship will continue well into the future.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our Treasurer, Gareth Bowen, and Secretary, Carla MacTavish, for their contribution and support.

I would particularly like to thank Vice-President Adrian McInnes in recognition of his continued significant time and effort put into representing the Chamber in several forums.

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 2008