



MAIDENHEAD
& DISTRICT
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

April, 2016

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I started my term as president by listening to a number of stakeholders in the community, including current and former members. I assimilated the feedback and produced a five point strategic plan aimed at making the Chamber more effective, more relevant and more appealing to the community.

The first point was to focus the Chamber so the executive, members and prospective members could articulate why the Chamber existed and its higher level, long term objective. Having led the executive through some workshops, a vision for the Chamber was created; that vision is to **"Develop a thriving, environmentally responsible and sustainable business environment within Maidenhead and the District"**. A link to this vision statement, along with mission and value statements that were also created, can be found on the website (maidenhead.org.uk).

Some feedback indicated the Chamber needed to raise its professional standing. Therefore, I realised the excellent voluntary effort the Chamber has enjoyed needed to be substantiated with professional services support to ensure important jobs were completed to a high standard. Whilst the Chamber has a limited budget, other inherent strengths - such as the Chambers brand and its community profile - mean it can deliver great value to willing sponsors. I'm pleased to announce several sponsorships have been agreed throughout the year; one sponsored item includes a professionally designed promotional leaflet for the Chamber.

As sub groups, or sub committees, execute the bulk of the Chamber's work, I made rebuilding, refocusing and supporting them a priority. Following a small reorganisation for increased effectiveness, the current sub groups are Membership, News and Media, Finance, Operations & Processes, Planning & Regeneration and Events, Education & Training. Local government liaison is an activity that needs to be reflected through all the Chamber groups. It's been a pleasure to welcome new executive members and a new Treasurer to be elected at the 2016 AGM.

Reaching out to members and non-members for mutual benefit, was one key reason for introducing 4 main events per year. Building the Chamber's database, raising the Chamber's profile and extending the Chamber's reach within the business community, creates more networking opportunities for the membership. Informational and educational events have played a major role in fulfilling this strategic objective as have the social media skills training sessions. The second main event last year saw Terry Morgan, Chairman of Crossrail, give an address on Europe's largest infrastructure project with 140 in attendance. Tim Smith, CEO of the TVBLEP and Andrew McMillan, Strategic Director of Operations at Heathrow, spoke at other events.

Maximising collaboration and forming effective partnerships with organisations who have similar or complimentary goals was the final strategic objective targeted for the year. The Chamber has liaised with several organisations, including the library to support businesses better, other

networking groups and TVBLEP (Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership) among others. Events have been arranged in conjunction with members - such as the One20 Lunch Club (sponsored by the Advertiser and the Donald Reid Group). A joint brand for networking events - "Networking 3" - has been developed through collaboration with Business Biscotti and the MBG network following a successful Christmas event (which sold out). Three (Hutchison 3G UK Limited) worked with the Chamber to offer digital skills training. Meetings with UKTI, on how the Chamber can best encourage companies to consider new markets through exporting, have led to one member attending a UKTI export programme and several others have been signposted.

Following market research, several meetings and discussions, I signed a deal with the Buying Support Agency (BSA), who utilise professional buyers to enable the membership to cut costs on business overheads, minimise purchasing time and therefore increase profits. The FREE access negotiated for members saves a headline figure of £495 per annum in subscription fees. As the Chamber receives a small monetary percentage of business conducted through the agency, members can reduce costs while simultaneously further supporting the Chamber.

Specialist Interest Groups (SIGs) have been introduced to enable members to benefit more from their membership while working with other members for mutual gain. By growing SIGs under the Chamber umbrella, additional support can be offered such as encouraging others to join, leveraging the Chamber brand when approaching suppliers and/or providers and lobbying other organisations. SIG events can be sent to the Chamber's database and promoted via other online media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and the Chamber website.

Transformation of the Chamber is a work in progress and the planned outlook is a continuation of the above strategy. Promising main events for 2016 include Google's Digital Garage – a "must attend" session for all businesses who would like to attract more clients via the Internet – the Managing Director of National Rail Western Route to speak on the Western Rail Link To Heathrow (WRLTH) and the Managing Director of Great Western Rail (GWR). Further collaboration is being sought with local corporate companies; relationships with current partners will continue to be fostered for mutual gain.

A new focus area for the forthcoming year will be to encourage further inward investment which will facilitate occupation of vacant offices, bring opportunities for the membership and further uplift the district. The Chamber will continue to support the regeneration of Maidenhead; helping to resolve challenges for successful project implementations and providing constructive responses to planning applications - The Landings opportunity area was given final approval following a meeting between the Chamber and the developers.

I thank the executive for their time and effort in helping to move the Chamber forwards. I express particular gratitude to Peter Higley who will be stepping down as Treasurer after several years in the post. My thanks to the membership for continuing to support the work of the Chamber and I appeal to each member to actively engage with Chamber activities to help progress towards the vision.

Olu Odeniyi
President
Maidenhead and District Chamber of Commerce