



Stowmarket & District Chamber of Commerce

AGM 2023-24 Chairman's Report

Our purpose is to **Champion, Connect and Communicate** to help local business **Grow and Prosper**.

- **Champion** what local businesses are doing
- **Connect** them to support one another
- **Communicate** the best ideas, training and support to them

We have been fulfilling this and this year has been one of growth and we are delighted.

Our targets for the year

Last year, we set ourselves the focus for 2023/24 of

1. Explore and develop our offering e.g. have further Safari Networking events
2. Grow the Stow Chamber Business Exhibition to include more stands and include businesses of the same type. We plan to run this again in Spring 2024.
3. Further develop the Community Connection and its use to benefit members, (Stowmarket Chamber CHAT & Stowmarket Chamber CATALYST)
4. Continue to grow the membership to bring more benefit to members

Well, I am pleased to say we have hit these targets very successfully.

1. Safari networking and other events

We ran a Safari breakfast as part of our MSBE. This had 44 booked to attend and there was a real buzz in the room and many reporting how great they found it. There was no joint Suffolk Chamber Safari networking this year. We also ran a new Christmas event with drinks and nibbles, stalls and competitions. Again, attendees gave lovely feedback.

2. Stow Chamber Mid Suffolk Business Exhibition

This was a great success as we moved to Stonham Barns to accommodate more stands and space for the networking breakfast. This year we had 52 stands and 155 visitors who booked and 95 visitors who attended. Stallholders feedback was that they were delighted with the connections from visitors and other stall holders. My thanks to Sarah Manning for outstanding leadership in running this for us.

3. Community Connection

The community chat and community connection is in place. We switched the resources from our website to hosting on Facebook. This improved access. Community Chat is in place with some Chamber members engaging in this.

4. Grow Members

We currently have 56 members. This is a significant increase from last year.

2023-24's Networking

So how have we been able to **Champion, Connect and Communicate** to help local business **Grow and Prosper**?

Networking breakfasts

We have continued with our hybrid breakfasts, allowing people ways of attending that works for them. Our thanks to Steve Stoddart for his technical support on the hybrid technology. Topics from speakers over the year have included

Month	Speaker	Numbers
June 2023	John Bradbrook (Any IT)	25
July 2023	Jo Moss (Moss HR)	22
August 2023	Jason Ford (FWD Accounts)	23
September 2023	Mike Bernard (Utility Warehouse)	23



Stowmarket & District Chamber of Commerce

October 2023	Andrew Bingham (Andrew Bingham Funeral Service)	25
November 2023	Mike Smith (Foodbank)	28
January 2024	Cate Caruth, (Creative Words)	27
February 2024	Josh Finch (Squab Storage)	20
March 2024	Colin Tapscott (Everyday Leader)	22
April 2024	Kim Morrison (Morr Marketing)	29

Breakfasts have had an average of 24 this year (up from 18 last year)

Networking Coffee Mornings

Coffee mornings have been held on the first Friday of the month at venues across the area.

Month	Venue	Numbers
June 2023	Cedars Park Community Centre	21
July 2023	Innovation Labs	26
August 2023	Brightside	11
September 2023	The Green Room	15
October 2023	Humber Doucy Brewery	27
November 2023	Swan Needham	26
January 2024	Brightside	19
February 2024	Osiers at the Church	25
March 2024	The Green Room	17
April 2024	Softwood Books	23
May 2024	Moss HR	27

Coffee mornings have had an average of 22 this year (compared to 23 last year).

Thank you

My thanks to the committee who had worked tirelessly to support Stowmarket Chamber members. My thanks to Lilly Higson, Kim Morrison, Sarah Manning, Jo Moss, Keely Taylor, Alison Withers, Jason Ford. They all do so much behind the scenes in voluntary time.

Remembrance

Amongst all this growth and success this year, we sadly saw the passing of our dear chamber member, former Chairperson and friend Allan Scott. He was at the core of generating the wonderful friendly atmosphere that we have at Stowmarket Chamber. So much of what the chamber is today is owed to Allan and the way he formed genuine and heartfelt connection with others. Before he passed away, his honest and engaging blogs helped us all as he raised awareness and understand the impact of bowel cancer. It was moving to see how many Chamber members were present at his funeral. Thank you Allan – your legacy in the chamber lives on.

Next year

It's been a great year and so we consider the next one. 2024/25 will have this focus for us

1. Grow our committee so we can continue to offer high quality support for business
2. Further increase membership numbers. Look to add another 10 members over this year
3. Develop some automated systems to help onboarding for new members and engage admin support to free up the committee
4. Build on the success of Stow Chamber Business Exhibition to include more stands and networking opportunities
5. Continue to grow the membership to bring more benefit to members

Help us do this in 2024/2025

Colin Tapscott

Chairman Stowmarket Chamber of Commerce

17th May 2024