

## BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

### Minutes of the AGM

Held at The National Metalforming Centre, 47 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, B70 6PY (Sat Nav B70 6QE) on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 10.00am

#### Members Present:

10 people attended representing 10 member companies. (Quorum requires 15 or more members in attendance or via proxy)

#### In attendance:

6 Black Country Chamber employees and the Black Country Chamber Chair.

No apologies were received.

22 member proxy voting forms were received.

The meeting was opened at 10.00am by Bankie Williams, Chair of the Board of the Chamber who explained the agenda, so all present understood the format of the meeting.

The President, Julie Cunningham, unfortunately could not attend and so her report, as attached, was read by the chair. There were no questions.

The C.E.O. Corin Crane thanked everyone for coming and then gave his presentation as attached. The chair gave the governance presentation as part of this presentation.

Q – The Chamber claim to be inclusive, but the price of bronze membership seems expensive for a small business.

A – The Chamber is a commercial enterprise and much work was carried out before the change to the pricing structure. Members present said that the Chamber is there to be used and if you use it correctly and become involved you do get value for money. Inclusivity is more than just a price tag. Members must let the Chamber know what they need. Engage with Chamber staff and other members and you get great support.

The Chamber was commended on its work reflecting the work ethic of the Black Country.

Voting on the following resolutions then took place:

#### 1. To Receive the President's Review

The resolution was passed.

#### 2. To receive the Chief Executive's Report

The resolution was passed.

#### 3. To receive the report of the directors and the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

The accounts were laid before the meeting as approved by the board of directors and will be delivered to Companies House. There were no questions from the members.

The resolution was proposed and seconded and passed by the members.



4. To re-appoint CK Chartered Accountants as auditors from the conclusion of this meeting until such time as a tender process has been completed during 2020.

There were no questions from the members.

The resolution was proposed and seconded and passed by the members.

5. To elect three directors from the shortlisted candidates being; Ali Allibhai, David Roberts and Joanna Smith.

The chairman announced a poll would be taken and asked for the members to vote on each director and after including the proxy votes, the result was that Ali Allibhai and David Roberts were re-appointed to the board and Joanna Smith was appointed to the board.

The meeting concluded at 10.45am with thanks to all for attending.

I am delighted as President of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce to give an update on the year.

During my tenure, I intended to work closely with members to raise the profile of our local Chamber on both a regional and national level. The Black Country Chamber of Commerce has had ambitions for first-class business support, so this has been a very exciting time to be part of the organisation.

Furthermore, I took on this role to champion local, civic businesses in the Black Country and lobby on their behalf on key policy areas. The Black Country Chamber of Commerce launched their first Business Manifesto. Approved by the Chamber's Consultative Forum, developed and supported by major organisations and members, the document sets out the key priorities that will be championed by the Chamber on behalf of its strong business community over the coming months.

Many of the issues outlined include longstanding issues that companies across the UK face, as well as those unique to our geographical area.

Throughout the Manifesto's pages, readers will discover the key topics and themes; manufacturing, finance, transport, skills and business essentials, along with the Chamber's responses.

The Manifesto focuses on a series of indicators from showcasing the region's established manufacturing sector and recognising and celebrating business excellence, to maintaining and building working relationships with strategic partners and Government departments. Providing strong leadership and a unified voice for a business-driven agenda that includes lobbying Government to secure a business-friendly BREXIT for UK plc, safeguarding the future interest of Black Country businesses exporting and regional investment will all play a crucial role.

This is a significant and welcomed statement of intent and provides a clear message to Government about the importance of investing in our highly successful region.

Reflecting on calls from our membership and in response to very significant shifts in the political landscape it sets out the challenges, opportunities and changes that members believe will successfully impact the region.

The Manifesto's success will be to ensure that everybody living, working and doing business across the Black Country benefits from its outputs.

In addition, I have a couple of priority areas that I have been focusing on during my Presidency that are very important to me, which relate to the Young Chamber programme and ethical finance.

The first thing I am most proud of is the work of our Young Chamber. The Young Chamber is a place where businesses work with schools and to create a range of opportunities which encourage our next generations to think about their careers, make choices and discover what the world of world means. These young people will go onto be our future employees, managers and leaders. They too have embraced an ethical approach to how they deliver the work of the Young Chamber and have been actively raising money for, volunteering for and helping our local foodbanks.

Being Chamber President means that I am the leading ambassador for this organisation, and I've been humbled and felt that these passionate and engaged young people are equally great ambassadors for the work of the Chamber.

Secondly, Ethical finance is also important to me, and given my financial background, I have an understanding of the importance of ethical lending in the local community. Therefore, I have been looking to support Credit Unions in the Black Country and champion the opportunity for local employers to support local low-cost loans.

Ethical finance has continually gained traction and garnered interest since the financial crisis in 2008. Investors, businesses and the public can all benefit from more transparent and sustainable financial decision making. In an age of 24 hour news coverage and social media, what businesses do with their customers money is prone to more scrutiny than ever.

Corporate Social Responsibility, correct governance structures and green investments are all critical, which I have a personal and professional interest in. By rewarding and ultimately sharing best practice, we can raise awareness of why ethical financial decisions are crucial to the success of the Black Country.

My term as President ends and I have been deeply honoured to help champion the work of this Chamber. All that remains is for me to say, is a huge thank you to all of you for your continued support. I may be stepping down from the Chamber shortly, but I'll still continue to keep a close eye on its work and developments and I would encourage you all to stay engaged and get involved!

# Annual General Meeting

25<sup>th</sup> November 2019



BUSINESS IS DONE BETTER TOGETHER



Black Country  
Chamber of  
Commerce

# 2015 – 2017 In Decline

**Commercial Revenue Declining**

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**Governance Issues:** Changes at board level, 3 CEOs in 9 months

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**Poor Staff Morale:** Disparity in pay levels, poor internal and external communications

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**Low Member Satisfaction Levels**

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**Low levels of engagement with local and national partners**

# 2017 – 2020 Getting good

**Restructure with Key Appointments**

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**High Profile Events:** Black Country Business Festival, Prosper Magazine, Business Awards

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**Governance Review**

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**Investment in Business:** New Website, New CRM, Staff Training, Brand Refresh, Marketing Budget

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**New Membership Model**

# 2020 – 2023 Being the best

**The most digital Chamber in the country**

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**The best business support organisation**

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**A commercially viable property purchased that is a beacon for regional businesses**

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**'Closer Collaboration' with neighbouring Chambers**

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**Exemplars in Inclusive Leadership**

# Looking Back - 2018 - 2019

**Financial Outturn for year was -£136,150 before taxation, with balance sheet reserves now at £1,301,113**

**A major restructure completed**

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**Investment in new CRM and Website**

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**Major investment in first Black Country Business Festival**

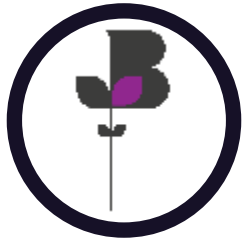
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**Completion of membership price restructure**

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**Governance Review**

# JANUARY



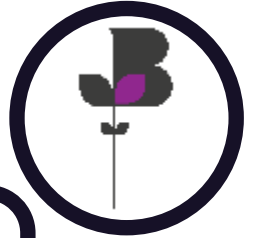
**Start<sup>up</sup>**  
Business club  
Launches

**EXPORT DOCUMENTATION**  
Staff complete customs declaration training for Brexit readiness

**BUDGET & BUSINESS PLANNING**  
Completed for 2019/2020

**BREXIT**  
1<sup>st</sup> Brexit & International Trade Seminar held

# FEBRUARY



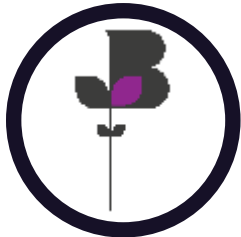
**Young Chamber**  
Foodbank Campaign Launches

**MANUFACTURING POLICY FORUM**  
Launches

**MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**  
Cohort #4  
Oversubscribed

**1<sup>st</sup> MP & Business Engagement Event held in Wolverhampton**

# MARCH



First Commonwealth Games 2022 Event advising Black Country Businesses of opportunities

**Future Link**  
Networking for young professionals launches

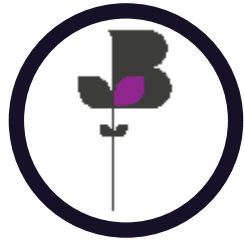
**BREXIT**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Brexit & International Trade Seminar held

**AIM PROJECT**  
Completed with all outcomes achieved

**europa direct Black Country**  
Project extended



**APRIL**



**THIRD WEEK WEDNESDAYS**  
New FREE Networking Event launches

**fbcmaby bowdler**  
SOLICITORS  
Two year sponsorship  
Manufacturing  
Policy Forum

**BLACK COUNTRY TRAINING**  
New training brand and courses launches

**B**  
Black Country Chamber of Commerce new brand identity unveiled



**MAY**

**StartUp HIGGS & SONS**  
Business club SOLUTIONS  
Sponsor announced

**IoD Director Training**

**BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS MANIFESTO**  
Launches

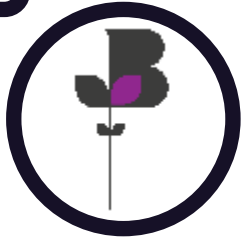
**BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS FESTIVAL™**  
INNOVATION | CULTURE | COMMERCE

**LAUNCH EVENT: Black Country Women In Leadership**  
Women in Leadership Network launches

**CAREERS SPEED NETWORKING**  
100 Business & 300 Pupils

**CONSTRUCTION POLICY FORUM**  
Launches

**FLAGSHIP MULTI-AGENCY EVENT**  
BCC, IoD, FSB, MADE UK explore business in post-Brexit world



**JUNE**

**RESERVES DAY**  
26 JUNE 2019  
Armed Forces Reservists Day Event in Sandwell

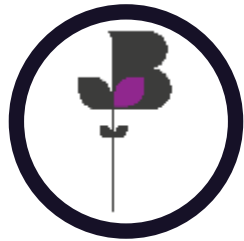
**BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER AWARDS 2019**  
#FINALIST  
Nominations for awards close with record number of entries

**2nd MP & Business Engagement Event**  
Event held in Wolverhampton

**BUSINESS NETWORKING CLUBS**  
Launch in every region of the Black Country

**FINANCE AUDIT COMPLETE**

JULY




International Organization for Standardization

Passed



Clear direction

Sponsor announced for Black Country International Work




WMCA & WM Chambers work together on Brexit Support



THE MANUFACTURING ROADSHOW

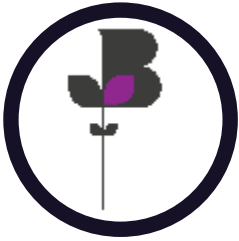


BCC audit and reaccreditation



New Chamber website unveiled

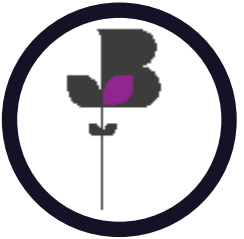
SEPTEMBER



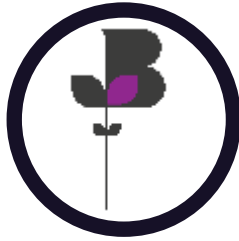
EXPORT DOCUMENTATION AUDIT

Passed and Black Country Chamber reaccredited

AUGUST



Prosper Magazine Relaunches



OCTOBER



Who am ya?  
Where am ya?

GET INVOLVED

Chamber announces new initiative to support the region's visitor economy

CHAMBER CUSTOMS

New services for import launched in conjunction with BCC



INTRODUCING... THE BIG BLACK COUNTRY BUSINESS FAYRE

DISCOVER NEW SUPPLIERS AND EXPLORE OFFERS & DISCOUNTS!

FREE TO ATTEND

REGISTER

Black Country Chamber of Commerce  
New Business Fayre launches

# Six Key Goals for 2019 - 2021

**Goal 1: Grow Chamber members and increase retention rate**

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**Goal 2: Financial sustainability – new products and services**

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**Goal 3: Local, Regional and National Representation**

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**Goal 4: Raise profile of Chamber and its members**

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**Goal 5: Bridge the gap between schools and business**

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**Goal 6: Support & develop our staff, develop a modern and flexible workplace**

# Questions?



BUSINESS IS DONE BETTER TOGETHER



Black Country  
Chamber of  
Commerce

Good Morning, this is my first formal address to the members of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce since being appointed as Chairman of the board just before the AGM last year.

Much has happened between then and now and I want to take this opportunity to share the details of what I, but more importantly, your Board, has been up to over the last twelve months.

From my appointment my brief was to improve the effectiveness and the governance of the Board

My priorities became clear very quickly, the most paramount of which was to give my full support to our excellent CEO. He was seeking to deliver necessary changes which inevitably had the unintended consequence of causing ambiguity, uncertainty and in some quarters, resistance.

But as business leaders trying to lead and manage change within your own organisation, I am sure you will be familiar with these consequences and I commend Corin for his determination to 'do the right thing' even when on occasion that brought him into conflict with the board.

The second task for me was to provide strong leadership at board level and I am indebted to the Board and wish to publicly thank them for their support in allowing me to facilitate some tough and sometimes fierce conversations about our own purpose, structure, agendas and focus.

A key event in the transformation to the way in which the board operates now was a program; "The Responsibilities of Directors" delivered by the IoD and I commend it to all business leaders seeking to improve the effectiveness of their own boards. The program provided a platform from which we could develop a common understanding, context and language for us to operate as a team. As a result we have been better able to tap into the deep expertise and skills that had remained largely under-utilised within the board.

The key change has been the way in which the board no longer focuses on the day to day minutiae of the chamber's business, freeing the executive to do this. The result of this change is that individual board members are now able to lend their considerable skills and expertise as an advisory source for the executive in shaping and delivering key projects throughout the year. The most noticeable of which has been the redesign of our membership offer.

I would be remiss to try and ignore the wider impact of this particular initiative and so I would like to share with you the Boards' thinking behind this project.

There were two key drivers behind our actions; the first being a realisation that as an organisation we could not ignore the inescapable fact that we, along with almost every other chamber, had to acknowledge a steady decline in member numbers.

**WITHOUT MEMBERS, WE SIMPLY HAVE NO REASON TO EXIST.**

At board meetings we had some robust and at times uncomfortable discussions around the reasons for the decline. When I say uncomfortable what I mean is, for example, I did not allow us to accept the national trend as a legitimate reason for us not to address the issue. This is the purpose of the board; to question and challenge the executive and to provide broader and deeper insights in support of the executive.



My own background and experience as a former Managing Director of HomeServe gave me insights about membership organisations that enabled me to lead the board to the conclusion that whilst understandable, our response to this phenomenon was unsustainable. As an organisation we were offering more and more in order to appear an essential and obvious choice for our existing and target market. However what we were in effect doing was creating confusion about who we are and what it is we were offering.

Once we accepted collective responsibility for this, without apportioning blame, we set about correcting the situation. The executive with board support, in particular from Jude Thompson and Ali Allibhai, set about examining every aspect of our offer; along the way engaging with members in an iterative process which, in my view, has resulted in a much cleaner, unambiguous membership offer.

The outcome has not pleased everyone. Change on this scale was never going to, but who has ever delivered strategic and tactical organisational change that has pleased everyone. If you have, apply to join the board at the next opportunity because I want to hear from you!

Whilst it has been a difficult journey for members, chamber employees and the board alike I would offer, as evidence of successful change and improvement: the truly amazing work of our External Affairs team and the re-launch of our incredible Prosper publication. It is a business magazine relevant for our time, providing real thought leadership on the key issues that impact all of us in the Black Country. I can't wait for the next edition!

As far as I am concerned the new Prosper magazine, and other key initiatives on the go, are setting new minimum bench marks for the Chamber.

I would now like to share with you some of the other strategic initiatives Corin and his team will be pursuing over the next year and I urge you...where you have expertise or significant interest to please get involved.

- It is our declared intention to become regarded as the **Best business support organisation in the Midlands.**
- It is our declared intention to become **a fully digital chamber.**
- It is our declared intention to **collaborate more closely with our neighbouring chambers where we believe in doing so will deliver significant benefit to you, our members.**
- It is our declared intention to become **a fully inclusive organisation, leading by example, tapping into the huge talents of our own employees and the exponential gains we can make by getting closer to and listening better to you, the members.**

It would be remiss of me to end my statement here without paying tribute to Julie Cunningham, who as President has, by rotation, stepped down and is succeeded by Jude Thompson to whom we pass our congratulations.

I have not had the opportunity to know Julie for long, but her strongest traits have been her abilities to remain calm and focussed on the end-game but at the same time remain an anchor point of psychological safety whilst articulating and supporting the need for change.





On behalf of the Board and the employees I hope that you will join me in a formal vote of thanks for her tireless dedication to not just fulfilling the role and task of President but also as a key member of the business critical Audit Committee.

It is a deep honour and privilege for me to Chair a board of committed colleagues, all of whom give their time freely to improve member value and experience. I will continue to build a strong, resilient and effective board for you.

More humbling for me is to be associated with an organisation with employees whose purpose and passion is to come to work every day to do their very best for you.

I close by wishing you all an early Christmas wish and untold and unforeseen riches arising out of the current chaos none of us is able to predict or control which is why, in my view, remaining a member of the Chamber and bringing a friend to join is now more than ever a commercial imperative.

Thank you.

Bankie Williams  
Chairman