

Wilton and District Business Chamber Report to SWWAB. September 2014

Dear Board Members

The continued support of the Board has been especially appreciated over the past six months, during which the roadworks (end of April – end of August), have had a negative impact on both the morale and profits of some businesses in the town. The very existence of the Chamber, by reason of Area Board funding, has allowed us to offer support and to propose the re-launch of the town, once visitors and tourists understand that we are “fully open for business” again.

Persuading those who have dropped the habit of coming in to Wilton in recent months, to resume that habit, may not prove simple, however.

In measuring our successes (and otherwise) since the March 2014 report, both specific SWWAB-funded projects and the Chamber’s other work must be considered. Please be advised of the following, with reference to our declared aims:-

1. Raising the profile of WDBC amongst the business community.

- . the existence of WDBC is now well-established amongst the business community, through regular advertising in The Valley News, our newsletters and events, our appearance at The Community Carnival, organising The Wilton [Business meets Community] Event, undertaking the Benchmarking for the town, and otherwise.
- . paradoxically, the sense that “somebody is fighting their corner” and is receiving (and passing on) information which is relevant to them, may be acting as a disincentive to some businesses applying for membership.
- . membership numbers remain steadfastly at c50, with a small number leaving and a similar number joining. Despite the clear success which the Chamber has achieved in promoting the notion – both to businesses and to the general public – of a Wilton and District business community, a concerted membership drive, given our reliance on volunteer time and the time demands of other Chamber activities, is beyond the manpower and resources which we currently have available.
- . the recognition that getting more potential customers in to see the individual providers of goods and services locally is best achieved by getting more people into the area, and the importance of working with and integrating the c60 businesses which will be accommodated in the new business hub at the Wilton Hill development, do now appear to be accepted by our member (and other local) businesses.
- . we organised our first “Retailers’ evening”, at 1800 on a weekday evening, which allowed the Chamber to be seen to make a presentation to Wilton’s outgoing Postmistress.
- . we have actively sought to encourage members to be our speakers at breakfast events, have introduced a “bring a friend at member rates” for every 3rd breakfast and are also arranging site visits for attendees to visit members’ premises for demonstrations of their production processes and business operation.

2. Raising the profile amongst the wider community

- . we again took a stall at the Community Carnival at Wilton Shopping Village (as we did at The Baptist Church for The Elite Cycle Race, in early May), distributing WDBC pens, together with promotional materials on behalf of our Members, giving the Chamber a continued, visible, public presence .
- . again this year, we ran a monthly full-page ad. in The Valley News (at a much-appreciated discounted rate), for 6 months, each month sponsored by one of our members and listing all of our members and their contact details, which continues to keep WDBC in the public eye
- . undertaking - in high vis jackets - the benchmarking for the town, the results of which will be of significance and interest to the wider community, as well as to businesses, also gives us an obvious visual presence
- . our invitation to the Mayor's D-Day Commemoration and laying a wreath at the WWI centenary service, lent further credence to the Chamber as representative of local businesses and continued to promote the identification of a business community.

3. Raising the profile amongst other groups in Wilton

- . the Town Team (now a working party of the Town Council), started by WDBC, continues to meet and is currently putting together a Wilton website, with links to the websites of member bodies.
- . co-operation between WDBC and the Community Land Trust has allowed us to take an active role in discussion with Basepoint, who will be managing the c60-unit business hub at Wilton Hill.
- . Wilton Rotary and WDBC are looking to establish closer direct links.
- . The Town Team sponsored Wilton's "Big Lunch" again this year.
- . an excellent working relationship between WDBC and Wilton Shopping Village, has seen the latter host "The Wilton Event" and undertake to construct a new pathway to the A30, as part of the Town Trail.

4. Raising the profile outside of Wilton

- . Wilton was represented at the 3rd "Meet the Neighbours" event, in Shaftesbury, in March.
- . We had the Chief Executive Police and Crime Commissioner as our breakfast speaker, also in March, Graham Watson (then a long-standing MEP) as the speaker at our May lunch, Helen Birchenough from the Ageas Salisbury International Arts Festival, in September, as well as Member- speakers at other times - Paul Sample, the Mustard Agency, Tom Goodman (Wilton Estate Farm Manager and Nigel Cuff (cider maker)..
- . attendance at the Market Towns Networking meetings (by reason of my role of WDBC President) further enhances the status of Wilton - the smallest of the market towns - and of its Business Chamber.
- . I have continued to attend the Presidents' meetings of the Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce, "spreading the word" about Wilton across the county.
- .

As to the specific SWWAB part-funded activities in Q2 and Q3 2014 (and those planned for Q4): -

A: Identify and establish contact with Wilton and District businesses , with a longer term target of compiling a business directory on-line (of interest to potential customers locally and more distant and to the 1000's of prospective buyers of the new homes in Wilton).

Letters and questionnaires were not sent out in April this year, given the poor response in 2013. We relied, instead, on letters/business confidence questionnaires which we drafted and circulated alongside the benchmarking exercise and increasing visits and follow-up letters during the year.

It was decided that the monies were more effectively spent on promotional materials and advertising for local businesses to identify themselves to us.

Annual Budget: £1,500	£
Actual costs to date:	
Business Manager's time: (engaged as a consultant, not as an employee):	310
Stationery and printing :	147
Postage (+ sae's):	53
Advertising	250
TOTAL:	860

B: Presentation folders, membership packs, promotional materials

	£
Annual Budget: £500	
Actual costs to date:	
Business Manager's time – prep. and design	312
Pop-up banners	282
WDBC pens:	386
TOTAL:	980

NB: Further Business cards were gifted to WDBC

C: Website development and updating

Annual Budget: £1,500	£
Actual costs to date:	
Business Manager's time: (discussing design, collating and updating info.):	310
Production of materials for uploading	91
Advertising	250
Total:	651

D: Production of visitor information:

- . The route for a "Town Trail" was agreed with the Town Council last year and with Wilton Shopping Village, who are constructing, at their cost, a new footpath to the A30.
- . Visit Wiltshire, Ros Liddington at Wilton House and Wilton blue-badge guides David Richards and Margaret Smith, have all advised on format and content.
- . Our benchmarking report indicates clearly the need for greater links (physical and otherwise) between the Shopping Village and the town.
- . The drawings are being done currently and the wording is now written
- . We have agreed an A3 format and our Business Manager will obtain quotes for printing, once the drawings and text are approved

Budget: £1,500 for the year.

Cost to date:	£
Business Manager's time:	110

E: The Wilton [Business meets Community] Event/Expo

- . As hosts, Wilton Shopping Village have made no charge
- . As sponsors, Valley News have provided advertising, flyers and leaflets at little or no charge

Annual Budget: £2,000

Cost to date:	£
Business Manager's time:	300
Banners/signage.	TBA
Equipment hire	TBA
DJ	TBA
Contribution to Spire/Stars	TBA
Printing/Advertising	280
TOTAL TO DATE:	580

F: Business and Community Awards Ceremony, together with Wilton Rotary.

As the amount awarded was £7,000 for 2014-15, rather than the £7,500 requested, we elected again not to pursue this project in 2014.

Finally, we are mindful of the fact that SWWAB funding is due to end at the end of February 2015.

Although we now have an existing income stream from

- . increased membership fees
- . our networking breakfast and other events

and potential income from:

- . The Event, as it becomes more established
- . Businesses advertising on The Trail leaflet in the future
- . increased fee membership income, as the business hub comes on line on 2016 at Wilton Hill.

the reality is that the Chamber can neither hope to rely entirely on volunteer time and donations, nor be self-funding in the foreseeable future.

If, therefore, the momentum of what has been achieved thus far, in terms of raising the profile of the business community, WDBC, Wilton and the surrounding area, to local businesses (current and prospective), residents (current and prospective), visitors, tourists, and others, is not to be lost, then we have no option but to seek financial support/funding for the future.

Any guidance or assistance which SWWAB might provide in this regard, would be greatly appreciated.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

David von Zeffman
President, WDBC