



REVIEW

May
2009

FUTURE MEETINGS

17.30 networking
for 18.15 start

8 June

Majestic Hotel

20 July *

White Hart Hotel

10 August

Harrogate
International
Centre

14 September

Cedar Court

12 October

St George Hotel

9 November

Crown Hotel

* NOTE: New
date

Review of Chamber Meeting + News Update

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL

- Mayor seeks more support from local business for Harrogate at Christmas
- Council Leader and Chief Executive presentation on achievements and plans
- Strong local economy – but several medium-term challenges to overcome
- Council Vision: *To make Harrogate District a better place to live, work and visit*
- Q&A on skate park, sports facilities, housing, transport, traffic congestion, etc

YORKSHIRE BUSINESS MARKET

- Final total 203 Exhibitors with nearly 2,000 business people during the day
- Excellent feedback from Exhibitors – wanting same date same place next year
- Vital sponsorship by Business Link, Yorkshire Forward & LSC / Train to Gain
- Good supplements + tickets inserted in Ackrill Media Group & Yorkshire Post
- Visitor flow problems due to bad weather – new corridor will be open next year

AGM REPORTS & NEWS

- Robert Whiteley, Yorkshire Event Centre elected as President for second year
- David Horth, Mark Lancaster & Stuart Pearson re-elected as Vice-Presidents
- Neil Goodrum, McCormicks Solicitors, re-elected as Honorary Legal Adviser
- Michael Best, David Newton & Co, succeeds Mark Hunter as Hon Treasurer
- Positive reports on a successful year by President, Chief Executive & Treasurer

Future Meetings

Monday, 8th June - Barceló Majestic Hotel, Ripon Road, Harrogate - 17.30 for 18.15

How to succeed starting & growing a new business

*By Ackrills Best Small Business Award Winner - HR180
together with their Business Adviser and Bank representatives*

Monday, 20th July * - White Hart Hotel, Cold Bath Road, Harrogate - 17.30 for 18.15

Going Global - how to start exporting your products and services (TBC)

Presentations by UKTI and British Chambers of Commerce, etc

PROMOTING HARROGATE BUSINESS

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce, PO Box 8, Harrogate, HG2 8XB

Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025 E-mail: info@harrogatechamber.org Website: harrogatechamber.org

PRESIDENT'S SURPRISE!

President, Robert Whiteley, hijacked the beginning of the meeting to say a few words about our Chief Executive. Starting with a quote from Phil Willis MP:

"Brian Dunsby has brought a level of innovation, expertise and professionalism to the Chamber over a great many years and as a result the local business community has access to an organisation that leads on behalf of its community. The outstanding development of the Business Market from humble origins to one of the most effective and sought after events in the Yorkshire region is down to his inspirational leadership".

Robert went on to say: *"Over the last four years I have experienced at close hand the gritty determination that Brian puts into every aspect of his work.*

He is as knowledgeable as anyone in Harrogate about all aspects of transport and planning and represents local business with great effectiveness as a respected member on a number of bodies throughout the region.

It was Brian's vision and inspiration that led to the first Business Market in 2005, and it is the success of his brainchild that has further strengthened the position of our Chamber and put it on a sound financial footing, enabling it to make contributions in further support of local businesses.

Perlex Associates, his own business, (he puts so much time into the Chamber, it is easy to forget that he has one), will launch in Harrogate later this year the first ever International Convention on Enterprise Promotion.

This will bring to Harrogate for three days up to 1,000 UK and international delegates and will ensure a great deal of publicity for Harrogate and benefit to local business.

I dare not tell you how many e-mails Brian sends daily, often in the early hours of the morning but I am sure it would not be an exaggeration to say that he regularly puts in 15 hour days, 7 days a week in championing small business.

And let's not forget that alongside Brian is his wife and business partner, Beryl who matches Brian's energy and commitment step for step. Together they make a formidable team which allows the Chamber to punch well above its weight.

Brian and Beryl, we can never properly repay you for everything you do for us, but the Management committee wanted to show our appreciation to you both, and we would like to present you both with a small token with our gratitude and affection for everything you do."

Robert and Stuart Pearson, presented a beautiful bouquet of flowers to Brian and Beryl, plus a voucher for a meal at the Royal Baths Chinese Restaurant, complemented with a chauffeur-driven car courtesy of Dave & Hilary Rucroft at 3 Way Chauffeur Cars.

After the applause died down Beryl said she felt humbled and added they both enjoy what they do and are happy if members feel it is of benefit. After Brian recovered from the unexpected change in the agenda, he too thanked the Management Group for their kind gesture.

THE MAYOR OF HARROGATE

In his last month as Mayor of Harrogate, we were pleased to welcome Councillor John Fox to the AGM. John said he would be handing over the chains of Office after a most memorable and enjoyable year. It has been a great privilege to be Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate and to meet so many lovely people. Adding that Harrogate is a great place to start a business.

John offered his congratulations to Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce and everyone involved with organising the **Yorkshire Business Market**. He said it had been a privilege to be part of the event.

In his year as Mayor, John has worked hard to engage with the business community and he has attended numerous business clubs concluding that networking is a very cost-effective way of identifying new clients, new markets and new opportunities.

He is very concerned about the increasing number of vacant shops in and around Harrogate and is aware that, as a tourist destination, it is important to keep the area looking smart. One local authority is working with owners and agents to allow local artists to use vacant premises. Another option could be a film applied to windows featuring the attractions of the area. He encouraged members to send in suggestions to improve this aspect of Harrogate and the surrounding towns.

As part of his ongoing support of the **'Harrogate at Christmas'** campaign, John is hosting meetings at the Council Chamber and asked members with an interest to get in touch. The Raffle held at the Business Market, co-ordinated by Harrogate Lions, raised nearly £1,000 but further funds are required from local business to match Harrogate Borough Council's commitment to put £10,000 towards the lights this year.

Members interested in supporting this initiative should contact the Mayor's Office: Tel: 01423 556033, Fax 556100 or e-mail margaret.kidd@harrogate.gov.uk

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Harrogate Borough Council's Leader, Councillor Dr Mike Gardner and Chief Executive, Wallace Sampson gave a comprehensive presentation reflecting on the past year and looking forward to the future. The key topics were:

Highlights reflected in numbers:-

- One million visitors to Council's leisure & arts facilities
- £1 million invested by Yorkshire Forward in Knaresborough and Boroughbridge
- HIC generated £150m of visitor spend across the district and gained Park Mark in 2008
- Parks get BIG Lottery Children's Play Fund award of £255,464
- Secured '£500,000 funding from BIG Lottery Fund to open cycle route Bilton to Ripley'

Results of assessments:-

- CPA assessment moved the Council from Fair to Good
- Scored maximum 4 out of 4 for Asset Management in a favourable Use of Resources Assessment
- 8th Green Flag for Ripon Spa Gardens

Success at award ceremonies:-

- Individual projects such as the Royal Hall
- Team performance – Sustainable Landlord of the Year for Housing Team + Green Business Award

Building project achievements:-

- The Royal Hall; Starbeck Baths; Harrogate Theatre

Can do attitude of staff:-

- Tremendous response to bad weather of January and February when we kept roads open & traffic moving

Medium-term Challenges

- Budget
- Investment in Harrogate International Centre
- Business retention - improving the offer
- Concessionary fares funding
- Highways Agency transfer
- Waste and recycling
- Transport - accessibility and congestion
- Economy - supporting small and large businesses

Our Economy

- Lower than average unemployment
- Visitor numbers holding up
- Business investment continues
- Enquiries for sites and premises comparable
- Shop vacancy rates keeping low

Support to Businesses

- Payment of invoices
- Business Rates - payment profiles
- Debt advice - joint work with CAB
- Decent Homes - acceleration of capital works
- Green technology - insulation & renewable technology

Opportunities

- HIC investment; Leeds City Region; Leisure tourism
- Closer working with economic development partners:-
-Yorkshire Forward; Business Link; Welcome to Yorkshire
- Closer working with local partners
- Strategic approach to business & visitor economy:-
- Economic development; Culture; Tourism
- Our environment and heritage

Corporate Priorities

- Caring for the Environment
- Homes for Local People
- A Connected District
- Stronger and Safer Communities
- A Strong Local Economy
- Shaping the Council Towards Excellence

Vision: To make the Harrogate District a better place to live, work and visit**A Connected District**

- Reduce congestion in our urban areas
- Improve accessibility, mainly in our rural areas
- Improve connectivity - road, rail, plane & electronically

A Strong Local Economy

- To sustain employment across the district
- To secure investment in the district
- To develop and consolidate the district's business and leisure tourism offer
- To support the development of high skills that match the requirements of local businesses

Moving Forward

- Chamber commitment is evident
- As it is amongst wider business community
- We share common goal and objectives
- We should be TEAM HARROGATE!
- Some good recent examples of working together:-
 - Direct rail to London
 - Leeds/Bradford airport
 - Review of leisure tourism

We need to be realistic – there are no instant solutions!

Robert Whiteley thanked Mike and Wallace and said he was very pleased to hear the words, 'planning', 'supporting' and 'business' in the same sentence. The Council and the Chamber clearly share many objectives.

QUESTION TIME

Stuart Pearson of The Trinity Foundation commended the Council on recent successes, such as the Royal Hall and Starbeck Baths. He asked if the Council had any plans for a long-awaited skate park for teenagers in Harrogate, following on from a new playground under construction in the Valley Gardens.

Mike Gardner agreed with Stuart that a skate park is overdue, but the problems in selecting the right site are security issues, following past sites being vandalised. He confirmed it was being looked into, but the Council wished to avoid a failure over leisure facilities where teenagers are concerned.

Brian Haines of eSOURCE Group asked what were the plans to support local sport and leisure facilities, following recent problems, particularly for the Cricket and Rugby Clubs and future needs of the Football Club.

Wallace Sampson responded that the Council believes that the Claro Road area is the ideal location for combined sports provision to include both the Rugby and Football Clubs, but that a district-wide assessment of needs must be undertaken before the Council can be certain. The necessary assessment of this will take up to 18 months and will provide a needs assessment for all sports. The biggest issue to deal with first is to reach an agreement with the Rugby Club and Football Club on a combined site.

Mike Cowling of Harrogate RUFC said Harrogate Rugby Club has been involved with these discussions over 10 years and stressed that more priority should be given to the future facilities for the 350 junior members who play each week, who from December 2009 may not have anywhere to play. On a wider theme, Mike said there needs to be more emphasis on making the opportunities available for young children in the town to play the sports of their choice.

Wallace agreed and confirmed that within the LDF Core Strategy the Bilton Triangle area is designated as a 'Sports Action Zone' to consolidate a range of sports provision in the long term. Certain stages have to be gone through, but the short-term priority is to maintain first and second team in the town, with temporary arrangements for the junior teams.

Stuart Pearson asked if the Council still had a large deficit because of the free bus pass for older residents. He suggested this reinforces to the youth that this area is looking after the older, rather the younger people.

Mike Gardner said it was a high priority to reduce the huge deficit that still remains because of the concessionary fares. The Government is not paying for the scheme, as had been promised, but it has been recognised that Harrogate is one of a few Councils that does need some help.

Mike Cowling asked if the Council could look very closely at the traffic accessibility for new developments, such as the proposed Tesco site to avoid any more congestion on the roads.

President's Report – Robert Whiteley

Wallace Sampson said this should be looked at in each individual case and if there is a specific case that isn't currently working, then the Council would look at it.

Lynda Cooper of Hampden House Care Home expressed concern at the difficulty in recruiting staff because of their inability to afford housing in the town, which affects a lot of the care home and tourist businesses in town.

Wallace Sampson said targets were being set in the LDF Core Strategy for affordable housing for this reason to avoid this problem worsening. The concept is supported by Government to help rural areas as well as towns. Though the current economic situation means developers are not investing in this kind of housing, in due course this will change.

Brian Dunsby said that affordable housing was not the quickest way to deal with the problem, and suggested an improvement to some of the bus services, particularly more east/west services for commuters to and from the surrounding areas into Harrogate at peak hours.

Stuart Pearson asked why the Council had not taken up any of the many suggestions made by Chief Executive, Brian Dunsby, to improve traffic flow in the town. Brian Haines echoed these sentiments.

Mike Gardner said that all suggestions had been looked at, but there are no solutions, simply because there are too many cars on the roads. Consideration also has to be given to pedestrians crossing the roads.

Brian Dunsby said the objection was not to traffic lights at pedestrian crossings, but to the long time the light remains red because the timer settings are not making use of the new Puffin crossings with a camera that detects when someone is crossing the road. He said that the bus company has identified the Knaresborough Road, A59 between Empress Roundabout and Starbeck Crossing, as having so many pedestrian crossings that the bus service has deteriorated because of the delays.

The upcoming change of responsibility for highways from Harrogate Borough Council to North Yorkshire County Council has led Brian to arrange a meeting with Head of Highways for North Yorkshire. A checklist of the most critical junctions in Harrogate at which action can be taken at a minimum cost by optimising the traffic lights and filter lanes will be drawn up.

Brian Dunsby commended the Council Leader for his work as Chairman of the Economic Development Committee for Leeds City Region (LCR). By being part of LCR, Harrogate has now been recognised as the main Conference venue for the region.

Wallace Sampson concluded by saying that whilst there are some areas on which the Council and Chamber do not see eye to eye, there are many areas of agreement. The focus should be on understanding what the issues are and having the commitment to take them forward. It is important to ensure the right solution to a problem is found first of all before any financial outlay is made. He would ensure Council Officers continue to work with the Chamber and others to find acceptable solutions based on sound information.

Chamber Members with specific suggestions for action by the Council should e-mail the Chamber Secretariat.

"At the start of the year I had four aspirations and I am pleased to report that thanks to the hard work and dedication of our administration, my colleagues on the management committee and with the support of our members, these have been met.

Firstly, I hoped that your Chamber would build on its role as the voice of Harrogate business and ensure that that voice was heard loud and clear. It has. Your Chamber enjoys a higher profile than ever and is regularly consulted by district and county councils as well as other bodies on matters of local and regional concern.

Secondly I was keen that the Yorkshire Business Market 2009 was even more successful than 2008. Our fifth Market last month was without doubt bigger and better than the previous year, with more exhibitors, more visitors and some fantastic feedback. There are now a number of imitators of the event, but none of them come close to our success.

Thirdly I hoped that your Chamber would find creative and worthwhile ways to use some of its financial reserves built up as a result of the Business market's success. Over the past year we have used funds generated by the Business Market to support Christmas lights and ensure that the maximum match funding for them was achieved from Harrogate Borough Council.

We also supported and contributed to a joint venture with Destination Harrogate, St. Aidan's, and Harrogate International Centre to develop a new visitor map. And we have supported, as sponsors, the Ackrill Media Group Business Awards and the inaugural Harrogate Hospitality and Tourism Awards.

My final wish objective was that by tonight the Chamber would be bigger, stronger and more thriving than it already was. The Chamber has never been stronger. Its level of membership, standing in the community, financial position and status as the voice of business in Harrogate are better than they have ever been.

In closing may I thank all of you for your support over the last year? I have thoroughly enjoyed representing you and I am sure that I can count on your continued support and encouragement in the coming year.

Treasurer's Report

Mark Hunter reported that figures in the Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet reflect all the hard work talked about earlier - the Business Market, District Mailings and reflect the amounts expended on the Business Awards sponsorship, Hospitality Awards sponsorship and the Chamber's net contribution towards the Harrogate Map.

The accounts show a net surplus of £7,688 for the year, which is over £2,800 up on the year before. The Operation Expenses have been kept under control with no major changes to last year.

The net reserves of funds for the Chamber as at 31st March 2009 stand at £34,787, which put us on a good financial standing to enable the Chamber to continue the good work for local business and our members.

Main activities and services organised during the past year:

1. The Number One Voice for Harrogate Business

- NYCC Harrogate Area Committee – co-opted place
- HBC - regular meetings with Development Services
- Harrogate District Strategic Partnership – Past-President Granville Simpson represents business.
- Local Development Framework – input to consultation meetings and public enquiries
- Leeds Bradford International Airport Consultative Committee place + private meetings
- Harrogate Line Rail Officers Group Meetings + NYCC, HBC, NR & METRO Liaison
- Royal Mail - Post Office closure objections + correspondence over poor delivery service
- Major local Planning Applications received for consultation and feedback
- Frequently contacted by local press and radio for business viewpoint.

2. Promoting Harrogate Business

- Again sponsored Ackrill's Business Awards – Small Business of the Year = hr180
- Frequent publication of Chamber Logo and profile + Awards Ceremony presentation
- Sponsored new Hospitality & Tourism Award by Destination Harrogate – Ambassador
- Harrogate Advertiser Series – frequent press reports, letters and features
- Business Pink incorporating On Location – several features on Chamber Projects
- Extended mailing of REVIEW to local VIPs and other key organisations in Harrogate
- More members taking the opportunity to insert suitable leaflets at a very low cost.
- Monthly e-mailing of meeting invitations + REVIEW to members, enquirers, press & VIPs.

3. Business-to-Business Direct Mailing

- 9th Business-to-Business Shared Mailing in March 2009 carried 12 inserts from members
- Promoted the Business Market to 7,000 businesses in Harrogate District + adjoining areas
- The 2008 mailing covered 5,500 businesses; the 2007 mailing was to just 4,500 businesses.

4. Monthly Meeting Arrangements

- Continuing to meet usually on the second Monday of each month has proved successful
- Longer refreshment time from 17.30 until 18.15 proved popular for networking beforehand.
- Agenda sequence changed to facilitate a longer period for Members' Forum – also popular
- Continued moving around the larger hotels and other venues - all Chamber Members
- Meeting rooms and refreshments free of charge – many thanks to Cairn, Cedar Court, Crown, HIC, Holiday Inn, Hotel du Vin, Majestic, Old Swan, Pavilions, St George & White Hart.
- Management Group have met FREE at Evans, Grants, Kimberley, St Aidans & St Michaels.

5. Monthly Meetings Attendance & Content

- Attendance at monthly meetings has increased again in 2008 to an average of 56, compared with 52 in 2007 and 42 in 2006. In 2009 year to date we have attracted an average of 62.

- All meetings except the Safari now have keynote speakers on topical business issues
- More opportunities now available for members speaking and helping other members
- Members' literature display table increasingly popular – but only one item each please!
- Business Safaris very popular for new members and for networking + excellent buffets!
- No Social Events during the past year – but any suggestions would be welcome for 2009/10

6. Focus Group Activity

- **Business Development** - led by Stuart Pearson (VP) – emphasis on business-to-business promotion opportunities, building up Yorkshire Business Market + Seminars, Experts, etc.
- **Promoting Harrogate** – now led by Brian Dunsby (CE) – regular meetings with HIC Marketing & Tourism Unit, Destination Harrogate, Hotels & GH Asscn, Key Attractions, etc. The main project has been the new Town & District Map joint with D/H.
- **Town Centre** - led by Granville Simpson (PP) – conducted a thorough analysis of extra signposting needed to assist visitors - HBC promise action soon
- **Harrogate at Christmas** – led by David Horth (VP) – rallying wider support and coordinating fund-raising activities with the Mayor and Harrogate Lions plus Harrogate College, etc
- **Traffic & Transport** - led by Brian Dunsby (CE) – continued lobbying for more improvements in bus, rail and air services - BUT no progress resolving traffic congestion on our roads!

7. Traffic & Transport

- **Airport Links** – the 767 Harrogate–Airport bus service is funded until April 2010 – but still only 90 minute frequency. Working with Transdev to improve service – so please use it!
- **Leeds Bradford Airport** – expressed serious concern over loss of Heathrow services and supported new links to London Gatwick & City. Supported Terminal Planning Application.
- **Local Rail** – close liaison with Northern Rail & NYCC - upgraded rolling stock and longer trains now in service with longer platforms + Promoting Harrogate flyers in Leeds and York
- **National Rail** - financial failure of GNER led to a new East Coast Main Line franchise with a few extra London services – BUT now National Express is facing the same problems!
- **First Harrogate Trains** – cooperated closely with MD of First Hull Trains who proposed new direct trains between Harrogate and London. ORR rejected their bid for invalid reasons.
- **Roads** – more traffic lights, pelican crossings, humps, yellow lines, red surfaces, posts, illuminated signs + Cycle signs = more congestion!!
- **New Projects** – Transport Interchange Development and town traffic routing consultation.

8. Harrogate District Chambers, etc

- Joint Meetings with Council Officers and the Presidents of Boroughbridge, Knaresborough, Nidderdale & Ripon Chambers / Business Assocs.
- All of the other Chambers etc. invited their members to the Yorkshire Business Market
- We also invited Bradford, Doncaster, Leeds, Mid-Yorkshire, Scarborough, Selby, Sheffield Tadcaster & Thirsk + FSB, NBA, WiRE, Forward Ladies, etc., to promote and attend YBM.

9. Political Relationships

- Maintained good relationships with Harrogate Borough Council Tory & Lib Dem Groups
- New Council Chief Executive Wallace Sampson had a meeting with the Management Group
- Closer contacts with North Yorkshire County Councillors & Officers including Mgt Grp meeting with Harrogate Area Committee Chairman Cllr Steve Macare and ATP Chairman John Jagger
- Phil Willis MP and the Mayor of Harrogate opened both 2008 and 2009 Business Markets

10. Membership Statistics

- The total paid-up membership for 2008-09 was 268 businesses – up 16 on the year (6.3%)
- In total 51 new members joined during the past year - but 18 resigned or retired and 27 were lapsed for non-payment last year. We have recruited 28 new members in 2009 to date.
- We make a continual effort to attract and follow-up a large number of membership enquiries
- Currently a total 180 enquirers receive regular e-mail invitations and reminders to join.

11. Membership Benefits

- Summary of membership benefits reviewed and updated. What more do you need?
- FREE monthly meeting for networking – yet numerous commercial networks emerge
- Numerous scam warnings collected and passed on to members & NYTS
- REVIEW Newsletter reports on each meeting plus Members' News + Business Briefings
- Monthly mailing opportunity for inserts in Review (about 350 each month) + solus mailings
- Negotiations with merged Leeds, York & North Yorkshire Chamber led to discount scheme.

12. Chamber Website

- Continuing updates done in-house by Maggie Hall using Microsoft FrontPage etc.
- On-line Membership Directory upgraded on-line with active web links & blind e-mail contact
- Anti-spam protection devised following two mass scam mailings to all members
- The latest edition of REVIEW is now e-mailed to all members and then posted on-line

13. Yorkshire Business Market – future growth?

- After five years, our Business Market is now a proven formula with growth potential
- In total 203 companies took all available space in the five rooms in Pavilions of Harrogate
- The total number of visitors and exhibitors staff was almost 2,000 – despite inclement weather
- The Exhibitor feedback was excellent with more people wanting more space next year
- So the question facing the Chamber Management Group is how it should grow and where?

In conclusion – I wish to thank the President Robert Whiteley, Past President, Granville Simpson and the three Vice-Presidents for their strong support and guidance throughout the past year. Many thanks also to the other members of the Chamber Management Group who are all named on the reverse of the Agenda. Finally my thanks to the Perlex team of Maggie, Beryl, Chris, Geoff and Tim for their flexibility and hard work to promote the Chamber and service the members.

Election of Officers 2009/10

Robert Whiteley of Pavilions of Harrogate was nominated and elected for a second year as President, with the full support of the Management Group and Past Presidents Group. Unanimously agreed.

David Horth, Victoria Gardens Shopping Centre, **Mark Lancaster** of Colour-it-in and **Stuart Pearson** of The Trinity Foundation were re-elected as Vice-Presidents. **Neil Goodrum** was re-elected as Hon Legal Adviser.

Michael Best of David Newton & Co was elected as Hon Treasurer in succession to Mark Hunter who retired after six years service to the Chamber. A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Mark as a token of thanks for his work over the past six years.

The following members were nominated and elected to fill vacancies on the Chamber Management Group:-

Ian Bergel - Auditel Ltd

Brian Coghlan - NatWest Bank

Simon Cotton - Cedar Court Hotel

Initiatives & Objectives for 2009/10

Following his re-election as President, Robert Whiteley said *“During the year ahead, we face a number of challenges to the well being of local business, quite apart from those presented by the current economic downturn.*

You may rest assured that your Chamber will be playing its part in trying to ensure that decisions taken locally serve to help, not hinder business in overcoming these challenges.

In order to do that, your Management Committee needs feedback from the membership. We need to know when and where you feel we could be doing more. We need your experiences of best and worst practice in business; we want to hear about your concerns and your triumphs. The Chamber is run for you the members, so do please let us know when you think we have got it right or wrong.

One challenge yet to be faced is the effect of the removal of the highways agency from Harrogate to the County Council. Whilst your Chamber has been highly critical over the years of the unfettered growth of traffic lights and other measures in our town which serve to slow traffic, cause congestion and add to the costs of business, we worry that a transfer of responsibility to Northallerton may make matters even worse.

We will be working hard to forge constructive relationships with councillors and officers at North Yorkshire to fight Harrogate's corner, get our fair share of budgets, and ensure that the effect of this change is only positive.

We shall continue to fight for improved road, rail and air links to our town. This will require joint lobbying by a number of parties with us to present a united strong voice to regional and national government and funding agencies.

Local and European elections will be taking place next month and it is quite possible that our AGM next year will be in the midst of a general election campaign.

Your Chamber is neither affiliated to, nor supportive of any political party. We will however be ensuring that the voice of Harrogate Business is heard loud and clear by all the candidates in whatever party. Our representatives need to understand what makes business tick, and that it is business that generates the wealth that underpins the vibrancy, vitality and well being of our community.

Your Chamber will, in addition challenge any bureaucracy, red tape and jobs worth attitudes in our government or elsewhere that slows or stifles investment and growth.

We had hoped to have Maggie Punyer with us tonight. Her company organises the Chartered Institute of Housing conference and exhibition in Harrogate in June, and two Bridal Trade Fairs each March and September. Between them they bring going on for 15,000 visitors to the town. She has for many years been a great ambassador for Harrogate and her confidence in our town has been influential on other organisers.

But attractive though Harrogate is we face fierce competition from other towns and cities, and we cannot assume that Maggie and other organisers will remain loyal. Our conference and exhibition centres and many hoteliers have ambitious investment plans to keep us at the cutting edge of business and leisure tourism, regionally, nationally and internationally. We will put all our weight behind any such plans if we believe that they will help keep Harrogate at the forefront of the events industry.

I freely admit that there is personal self interest when I say this, but it is not just the self interest of someone in the events business, but as a resident of the town who recognises that a prosperous tourist economy has benefits for the whole community. It keeps our town clean and attractive, our streets some of the safest in the country and attracts investment in our restaurants, cafes, shops and all the businesses that support them.

Tourism has underpinned the economy of Harrogate for more than 3 centuries, and I passionately believe that it will do so for a century or more yet if we do not neglect it in what is a fiercely competitive market.

This means investment in its infrastructure, commitment from our politicians and the continued support of our regional development agency to recognise that Harrogate is the conference centre for the Leeds City Region. It also requires our council planners to be seen as there to help businesses through a legal process, not as the builders of a series of obstacles to be overcome. The Promoting Harrogate group has, since its inception gone from strength to strength and will continue to draw together and work with all those with an interest in bringing visitors to our town.

Whilst retailers may not number many in our membership, we will continue to do what we can to support them in difficult times, whether by driving the Christmas lights campaign, lobbying to prevent higher or extended car parking charges, challenging over the top regulation of A-Boards or in whatever other ways present themselves.

I hope also that we may be in a position again to support financially initiatives which improve or promote facilities for our visitors. It would be good especially to see the tremendous work done by Past President Granville Simpson in lobbying to improve fingerpost signage around the town bought to a successful conclusion. Your Chamber Executive will be looking closely at any other ideas for using our funds to improve the visitor experience or promote Harrogate as a great place to visit or do business.

As a Chamber we punch well above our weight and it is the tireless work done by Brian, Beryl, Maggie and the rest of the team that makes this possible. You only have to look at the balance sheet that Mark has presented this evening to see what incredible value we get from our Secretariat.

It is easy for me to stand here and tell you what I think our objectives should be for the coming year. It is made even easier in the knowledge that I am sure that I have said nothing that will faze Brian, and with him at the helm I feel certain that we can achieve all this and more.

This brings me to my last and most important objective, which is to discover what Brian is on, bottle it and share it amongst you all. Now what a formidable force we would be then! May the force be with you!

Brian Dunsby reported feedback from the 203 exhibitors at this year's Business Market had mostly been positive with almost unanimous agreement on holding the event on the same date and month next year. Some exhibitors have indicated they might want more space which leads to the question of whether a marquee is necessary, or a move to the two main halls of the Yorkshire Event Centre.

One of the main issues this year was the flow of visitors to the Calder and Derwent Rooms, which should be addressed in 2010 by the relocation of the administration offices of the Pavilions. Mark Lancaster of Colour It In suggested using floor graphics, which are used successfully in supermarkets and exhibitions in order to help guide visitors around the site.

Stuart Pearson reported that the seminars had been well attended, though numbers were down on the previous year. Consideration will be given to increasing the range of seminars in 2010. Jenny Purdy suggested announcements for the Seminars during the afternoon would help remind visitors when they were starting. Announcements were consciously avoided this year so as not to interrupt the flow of conversations between exhibitors and visitors.

Peter Jesper conveyed his thanks as an exhibitor, saying that the footfall had been great, the quality of guests were brilliant and he felt it to have been The Jespers OFFICE's best year at the event so far.

Jenny Purdy particularly wanted to thank the students who helped exhibitors to unload and carry their equipment from their cars to the halls in the pouring rain! This was echoed by Robert Whiteley who thanked Marian Farrar of St Aidan's School and Anne-Marie Bostock of Harrogate College for recruiting students for this voluntary role, including helping to steward and check-in visitors and sell raffle tickets for the Harrogate at Christmas campaign.

One recurring comment received from exhibitors was the problem of visitors trying to sell to the Exhibitors. Robert Whiteley said this was difficult to deal with as the Business Market is essentially a business-to-business event and people will inevitably try to capitalise on that. Brian Dunsby said exhibitors needed to tell offending visitors to stop and report it to the organisers, particularly unsolicited literature left around the rooms, which happened this year.

Members expressed their appreciation to **Pavilions of Harrogate** for hosting this event. Their brilliant staff attend to every detail beforehand and on the day. Especially to their ever-present General Manager, Robert Whiteley, who co-ordinates everything to make sure things run smoothly.

Our thanks also go to this year's Sponsors: Business Link Yorkshire, Learning & Skills Council/Train to Gain and Yorkshire Forward. Not forgetting the fantastic support of the **Ackrill Media Group** whose Editor, Jean MacQuarrie and Business Reporter, Jenni Moulson provided so much advance publicity plus the full colour 8-page supplement produced by Anna Kendal-Greene.

The **Yorkshire Post's** support included a two-page feature the week before the event, including discounted advertisements for exhibitors, which generated a lot of late interest. Harrogate Borough Council, Business Link, Yorkshire Forward & LYNYCC put links on their website.

Finally thanks to all members and exhibitors who publicised the Yorkshire Business Market to their customers and suppliers which made a huge contribution to the success.

To ensure you receive the offer of a discounted space next year's Business Market on Monday, 26th April 2010 send an e-mail to the Chamber Secretariat NOW.

THANKS TO HOTEL DU VIN

Our grateful thanks go to Nick Lawson, General Manager at Hotel du Vin and the helpful staff for hosting the AGM with refreshments served in the Courtyard.

For further information on Hotel du Vin's facilities, which include a bistro, function rooms and luxury spa, go to www.hotelduvin.com or ring 01423 856800.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Monday, 8th June - Majestic Hotel

The next meeting will be held at the Barceló Majestic Hotel on Ripon Road, Harrogate with a presentation on the theme "**How to succeed starting and growing a small business**" by Claire Morley-Jones, Managing Director of hr180, winners of the Best Small Business in the recent Ackrill Media Group's Business Awards. Claire will be joined by Pamela Beaton from Business Link Yorkshire and Brian Coghlan from NatWest.

Monday, 20th July - White Hart Hotel** NOTE NEW DATE**

The topic for this meeting on the new date of Monday, 20th July (changed from 13th July) will be '**Going Global - how to start exporting your products**', with representatives invited from UK Trade & Investment, British Chambers of Commerce + supporting services.

NEW MEMBERS

Grange Office Furniture Ltd (Office Furniture)

Hazel Curtis, Office Furniture Adviser
Hammerain House, Hookstone Avenue,
Harrogate HG2 8ER

Tel: 01423 531455 Fax: 01423 531455

E-mail: hazel.curtis@grangeofficefurniture.com

Website: www.grangeofficefurniture.com

Greaves Wealth Management Ltd (Financial Services)

Jamie Greaves, Company Director
1 The Square, Regent Parade,
Harrogate HG1 5RG

Tel: 01423 563667 Fax:

E-mail: jamie.greaves@sjpp.co.uk

Website: www.sjpp.co.uk/gwm

Ripley Castle Estate (Castle and Hotel)

Sir Thomas Ingilby, Owner
Ripley, Harrogate HG3 3AY

Tel: 01423 770152 Fax: 01423 771745

E-mail: sirthomas@ripleycastle.co.uk

Website: www.ripleycastle.co.uk

The Skelwith Group (Property Developers)

Ben Pilgrim, Head of Communications
Regency House, York Business Park,
Poppleton, York YO26 6RW

Tel: 01904 788308 Fax: 01904 786952

E-mail: ben.pilgrim@skelwithgroup.com

Website: www.skelwithgroup.com

BUSINESS BRIEFINGS

Support for small business exporters

UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) has announced changes to its Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) to help small businesses take part in more overseas trade fairs.

TAP provides financial support for small and medium-sized firms through grants of £1,000, £1,400 and £1,800, and businesses can currently apply for a maximum of three grants.

The new rules double this to six, providing that successful applicants take part in trade shows in more than one market. Changes effective from 1 April 2009.

Find out more at <https://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk/>

HMRC guidance on cash accounting

The FPB is urging small businesses to find out more about cash accounting schemes whereby they only pay VAT on sales when a customer has paid them; they don't pay on outstanding invoices. HMRC has practical and detailed guidance on the Government's cash accounting scheme. Find out more at:

www.hmrc.gov.uk/vat/account-cash.htm

ICO releases guide to privacy

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has launched a new privacy report, entitled 'Privacy by Design', which aims to give businesses advice on how to implement privacy measures, such as compliance with the Data Protection Act, into their information systems. For more information see:

www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/pdb_report_html/html/1-foreword.html

Small business advice TV channel

The British Chamber of Commerce has launched a business advice online TV channel for entrepreneurs and business owners. The channel was launched in response to a survey, in which the business community said it felt TV programmes such as Dragon's Den and The Apprentice "dumbed down" public perceptions of business people.

Visit <http://www.smallbusinessadvice.tv/>

Discipline and grievance procedures

From April 2009 new procedures came into force to simplify discipline and grievance issues in the workplace. Designed to prevent problems escalating into serious issues, the new procedures will be more flexible than the previous processes were and are aimed at saving time and money for all involved.

Administered by Acas, the scheme has an improved helpline and a FREE early conciliation service. Revised guides and codes of practice have also been published and are available to download from Acas website.

For more information on the new procedures go to:

<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2126>

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce, PO Box 8, Harrogate, HG2 8XB

Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025 E-mail: info@harrogatechamber.org Website: harrogatechamber.org

Printed by Enid Taylor Ltd, Harrogate Tel: 01423 567764 Fax: 01423 567765 E-mail: info@enidtaylor.co.uk