

Experience Guildford Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 24 November 2022

6.00 pm The Long Bar, Harbour Hotel

Present:

Claire Suggitt – Chair, Tunsgate Quarter	Jane Lyons – Vice Chair, The Keep/PubWatch
Kevin Lorimer – The County Club	Andy Wood – HSBC
Sally-Anne Lowe – Yvonne Arnaud Theatre	Russell Harvey – Metro Bank
Carolien Jones – The Mad Hatter	Steven Meredith – Alliotts
Amy Rice – Guildford Institute	Ian Blyth – The Mandolay
Greg Foster – Decade	Jack Walker – Itsu
David Goddard – Biddles	Sam Orledge – White Lion Walk
Dawn Hudd – Guildford Borough Council	Gary Durrant – Guildford Borough Council
Carl Gravett – Weir Rhodes	Nick Wyschna – The Fallen Angel
Peter Alvarez-Buylla – TIC	Jude Couzens – TIC
Jane Tyson – ZERO Carbon Guildford	Shelly Willis – Harbour Hotel
Lily Qian – London Medical Laboratory	Ian Forward – Casino
Mark Stamp – ZERO Carbon Guildford	Tom Hunt – Guildford Borough Council
Amanda Masters – Experience Guildford CEO	
Pete Lambert – Experience Guildford Town Safety & Venue Liaison	Frankie Gale – Experience Guildford Business Support

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Claire Suggitt welcomed everybody to the 2022 AGM.

Apologies were received from Yishuang Chen (T4 Bubble Tea).

2. Minutes of last AGM

The minutes of the AGM on 10 November 2021 were approved.

Proposer: Carolien Jones

Seconder: Sally-Anne Lowe

3. Election of the Board

The following members are standing for re-election:

Jane Lyons, Pub Watch/The Keep – Vice Chair	Andy Wood – HSBC
Kevin Lorimer – The County Club	Ian Blyth – The Mandolay Hotel
Carolien Jones – Mad Hatter	Sally-Anne Lowe – Yvonne Arnaud Theatre
Ian Forward – Casino	Yishuang Chen – T4 Bubble Tea
Russell Harvey – Metro Bank	Mark Stamp – ZERO Carbon Guildford
Amy Rice – Guildford Institute	

CS stood down from the Board and the role of Chair; the Board selected Sally-Anne Lowe as the new Chair. Congratulations were given.

The following new members were proposed to the Board:

Dawn Hudd – Guildford Borough Council

David Goddard – Biddles of Guildford

Nick Wyschna – The Fallen Angel

Cllr Tom Hunt – Guildford Borough Council

Proposer: Nick Wyschna

Secunder: Jane Lyons

CS thanked the board and commented that the directors are all volunteers and claim no expenses from the BID company for their time.

4. Financial accounts overview

Steven Meredith from Alliotts presented the accounts for the year to 31 January 2022 commenting that in the year to 31 January 2022, EG was in a break-even position which is as expected at this stage of the BID. The balance sheet shows strong reserves, and overall, income is down due to smaller number of levy payers as businesses have closed. The Directors consider that EG is a going-concern because it retains adequate reserves. There were no issues arising from the audit and the accounts show a true and fair view.

A question was raised by GF concerning the high level of debtors in 2020/21. SM advised that provision has been made against those unable to pay due to business closure, and commented that the figure is also due to timing of receipts from GBC, who paid after the end of the financial year. GBC reconcile their accounts after their year end in March, and then pay the remainder over to EG.

CS expressed her thanks to Steven Meredith and the team at Alliotts.

5. Air Quality Action Plan

CS welcomed and introduced Gary Durrant of GBC to talk about the Air Quality Action Plan.

GD explained that air quality has been measured for over 30 years, certain areas of the town are above the acceptable national levels and action must be taken in the interests of public health. The Plan is currently in draft form and with DEFRA, however action must be taken. DH added that part of the issue is that there is no alternative route to the A3 and M25. Measures being considered include reduction of town centre congestion, HGV ban, clean air zone or low emission zone, EV charging hubs, congestion charging. The next phase is to conduct a survey to see where vehicles come from using ANPR, produce a feasibility study to see if measures introduced will be economically viable and consult on each phase. The time scale for introduction is 5 years.

Better infrastructure is required including safe locking areas for electric bikes which are prone to theft; DH commented that this is linked to “Shaping Guildford’s Future” which is at the detailed planning phase incorporating e-bike hire scheme, extend locking system to private owners, redevelopments with low volume of parking to encourage car sharing/car pools. The Park & Ride scheme has been reduced since the pandemic and is not currently fit for purpose. DH advised that it was integral to “Shaping Guildford’s Future”, and a subsidised joint venture between GBC and SCC.

SAL commented that cars and vans sit with their engines idling whilst waiting and it would be good to have a campaign to turn engines off. SAL added that many YAT customers drive because the bus service is not good.

In response to a question concerning minimal development of the town in recent years compared with other towns and not enough being done to roads and pavements, DH advised that this was the reason for “Shaping Guildford’s Future”. TH commented that the North Street redevelopment is going before the planning committee in December 2022 having been talked about for years, and it is the closest GBC have come to anything happening.

Cycles and scooters go the wrong way down the High Street during the day are a nuisance and never challenged. PL commented that a dismount notice is required, followed up with enforcement.

AM thanked GD for his presentation and added that a number of businesses expressed their concern about a potential congestion charge as reported in the Surrey Advertiser and was pleased GD could explain in more detail.

6. Overview of activities 2021-2022

2021 saw the Covid pandemic and various lockdowns; 2022 was Jubilee year with the town decked out in red, white and blue, flowers strung on the town centre wires, bunting, window graphics, and a return to normal projects. AM explained the following as a whistle stop overview of the projects and is touching on just some of the work

- Celebrate Guildford brand was rolled out
- Jubilee window trail and window competition
- Fun Time Thursdays replaced the urban beach in August and ran alongside a RingGo parking offer of 3 free hours
- Customer Service Awards – good for it to be back, voting by text message, and over 2,000 votes were received

Business Support

- AM welcomed Frankie Gale to the team
- Proudly Independent page in the Guide to Surrey highlighting 10 independent stores each month
- Social media support with focus on independents on a particular street
- Specific support, eg Weir Rhodes celebrating 125 years in business

Safe, Clean and Welcoming

- BCRP – running since 2014, introduced exclusion system in 2020 with 182 warning letters sent, of whom 163 recipients have not re-offended. It has grown in stature with more businesses signing up and more crimes being reported.
- Best Bar None – accreditation scheme to enhance the experience of visitors and improve the quality of management, endorsed by the Home Office. 34 venues entered in 2022. Covers areas such as staff training, risk assessments, domestic abuse, welfare of visitors.
- Welfare Champions – launched in August 2022, a tailor-made scheme to help staff spot exploitation, runs alongside Ask for Angela campaign in pubs, clubs and cinemas where people might be in a vulnerable position. 29 individuals were trained over 4 sessions
- Rangers – PL thanked the fabulous team of Rangers and noted that they have training in First Aid, dementia awareness, use of defibrillators, mental health awareness. If they don’t know something, they will find out the answer.

Christmas 2022

All Christmas 2022 events have been launched, hoping they bring people into the town centre.

- Thursday evenings – free parking in 4 town centre car parks and wandering entertainers, with thanks to Guildford Fringe.
- Saturdays and Sundays – workshops, street entertainment and Christmas characters around the town until Christmas
- Little Book of Offers – launched on 20 November with 115 offers available
- EG Christmas brand was printed as a postcard with a QR code to link straight to the What's On pages, and sent to 30,000 homes and businesses

AM thanked CS and the Board for their support and thanked the team for their hard work in the past year.

7. The Future - 2023

- 2023 will be a busy year delivering projects which were on hold due to the pandemic and any new projects included in the business plan
- Continue to pursue important issues
- Work with development on major projects alongside GBC and the developers themselves
- Refresh the EG app and include more parking
- Dress the town for the Coronation
- Help PL expand BCRP by going out to other towns: anyone misbehaving in 1 location will be banned from all member towns
- Strengthen partnerships – University of Surrey, Surrey Police, Guildford Borough Council, Surrey County Council
- Support you and your business – social media, training, events, vacancies

EG will continue to support the needs of businesses and needs to hear from you.

8. Questions and Any Other Business

It was noted that there are alcoholic vagrants in the garden adjacent to the library who cause a nuisance; PL advised that a public space protection order is in place which bans drinking and smoking, that begging is against the law, and added that the police and rangers should be notified.

GF raised a question for the Board: With the missing ballot papers, lower turn out and high number of debtors was the BID still viable? CS replied that she believed that to have been answered and invited GF to discuss with the Board. GF requested (and was given by SM) a hard copy of the accounts.

There were no further questions tabled.

9. Close

CS thanked AM, FG, PL and the Rangers for their sterling work during the year, and wished good luck to SAL.

AM thanked CS for the last year, and added thanks from the team and Board members.

CS thanked the Board for their support, time and advice.