

Minutes of Committee Meeting

Wednesday 8th January 2025 at 5.45pm in Quay House, Kingsbridge



1. Welcome & Apologies

Present:	James Spencer Scot Baston John Gardner Nicola Coulson Cllr Barbara Price Cllr Tony Price Jane Tyler Cllr Mark Goodey Sarah Burnett Cllr Sam Dennis	Chair Pebbles Group Vice-Chair, Kingsbridge Cornerstone Photography Treasurer Secretary Associate Committee Member, Modbury Parish Council Associate Committee Member, Modbury Parish Council Committee Member, The Winking Prawn Group Associate Committee Member, Salc. Town Council, Mayor Associate Committee Member, KCC Salcombe Info Centre Associate Committee Member, SHDC
Apologies:	Cllr Julia Wingate Cllr Steve Mammatt Cllr Sarah Wyatt Cllr Jasper Evans Kim Willis Alex Robertson Catherine Gillen Cllr Mark Long Dawn Blundell	Associate Committee Member, Kingsbr. Town Council, Mayor Associate Committee Member, Kingsbr. Town Council Associate Committee Member, Modbury Parish Council Associate Committee Member, Salc. Town Council Committee Member, Marketing Manager Committee Member, IT Workhouse Committee Member, The Brownston Gallery Associate Committee Member, SHDC (esp. Planning) & Salcombe Harbour Committee Associate Committee Member, Kingsbridge Info Centre
Absent:	Cllr Rufus Gilbert	Associate Committee Member, Devon County Council

2. Minutes & Actions

Minutes from December 2024 approved (with some actions pending).

Next Meeting Focus:

- Agreed that next month's meeting should focus exclusively on a deep dive into accounts, reviewing what has been accomplished and identifying gaps.
- Avoid bringing in visitors or external distractions during this period of analysis and planning.

Actions outstanding previously and ongoing

1. **Harbour Board:** Re-invite Salcombe Harbour Master to talk about how harbour can bring more benefits to local businesses. *Agreed to revisit from March.*
2. **Flood impact:** Decision to table flood impact discussions due to lack of pressing concerns from retailers and a focus on other priorities. Kingsbridge Town Council cited as a flood resilience model, so discussion paused. County Council input (e.g. RG or other) may be revisited in May.
3. **Freeport:** Concern over potential business displacement due to Freeport benefits, plus mixed understanding of Freeport advantages; committee requested a briefing before inviting SHDC speakers. *Update: SD to brief committee on Freeport advantages/implications, followed by possible email update to members.* SD
4. **Malborough & Salcombe Business Park:** Invite Simon Gotch to update on progress. Date TBD JS
5. **Website:** Phase 1 completion by mid-Jan 2025, with testing & adjustments before launch. SBa
 - Confirm if Stripe can support Direct Debit integration. *Update: Stripe have confirmed direct debit capabilities. SBa to test and confirm.*
 - Review the feasibility of retaining GoCardless as a fallback. *Update: GoCardless reviewed but deemed unsuitable for website integration.*
 - Finalise ongoing cost estimates, including hosting and maintenance, and integration with CRM tools like MailChimp. *Ongoing - SB to provide JG with a figure.*
 - Develop a detailed communication strategy for transitioning members. KW
6. **Membership fee:** £70 membership fee implemented successfully; some feedback received. JG
7. **Working Group** to review offerings and price points over the next 12 months. *Complete*
8. **Rebranding:** Strategically plan the chamber's rebranding & future direction to present at the next Business Club. *Done, branding complete, plan to launch at January Club* JS
9. **Member Survey:** Draft to gather feedback and agree content. To send out via Survey Monkey. *Update: Feedback form drafted and ready to be issued, pending approval.* KW/NC
10. Build on cross-Chamber collaborations - Ongoing JS

3. Council reports

District & County: South Hams District Council | Devon County Council

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- The government has introduced new policies to increase housing supply.
- Housing numbers will be imposed on districts with shortfalls, tilting the planning balance heavily towards development unless there are significant and demonstrable reasons not to approve it.
- The **Joint Local Plan** (over 5 years old) is now largely out of date.
- **Neighbourhood Plans:**
 - Plans older than five years without allocated development sites have little weight.
 - Newer plans or those with allocations retain significant influence.
- Greater protection will now be given to **protected landscapes**, e.g. AONBs.

Pause on Planning Applications

- Temporary hold on certain types of applications, such as converting farm buildings or demolishing one house to build two.

Housing Targets

- South Hams has been assigned new housing targets, although SD not able to provide specific numbers during the meeting.
- Emphasis on pushing developments to the fringes of towns or areas outside protected landscapes.

Parking Policy Update

- **Differential Parking Consultation:**
 - Public consultation on new tariffs is complete.
 - Final decisions will be discussed at the Executive Council on 21st January.
- New parking provider, **Pay By Phone**, only works on Android 9+ and iOS 16+, meaning older phones (more than two years old) are incompatible, excluding some residents.
- **Concerns about abolition of nuanced tariffs** - Previous efforts by local councils to establish tailored parking tariffs, such as cheaper parking in specific areas, have been scrapped without consideration.
- **Consultation concerns** - While a consultation on tariffs took place, the fundamental change to a differential system for visitors and residents was not part of it. Some on committee saw the consultation process as tokenistic rather than genuine.
- **Local opposition ignored** - Town and Parish Councils objected to the changes, but SHDC Executive is pushing ahead regardless, assuming residents will support the move.
- **Financial justification** - The increase in charges is partly driven by a reduction in government funding, including the withdrawal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant (see below), which leaves councils needing to fill budget shortfalls.
- **Potential impact on local economy** - There is concern that these changes could negatively affect businesses and commercial activity, particularly if visitor parking charges increase significantly.
- **Lack of transparency on future plans** - With discussions ongoing, there is uncertainty over the final direction of the policy, especially considering potential devolution changes.

Government Finance Settlement

- **Rural Services Delivery Grant** withdrawal results in:
 - Devon County Council: £10 million shortfall.
 - South Hams District Council: c.£500,000 shortfall.
- District councils must finalise budgets by January's year-end, despite reduced funding.

Devolution

- **Government push for Devolution** - White paper issued before Christmas encourages councils to accelerate devolution, with an option to fast-track via a mayoral system. Councils had until 10th January to submit proposals, potentially delaying elections.
- **District Councils' stance** - District councils unanimously oppose devolution and delaying elections. South Hams Council supports this stance, giving leadership a mandate for negotiations.
- **Devon County Council proposal** - Expected to propose delaying elections to shape devolution. Transition to a unitary authority could see district councils phased out by May 2026.

Business Implications

- JG noted the urgency to unpack what these changes mean for local businesses.
- Potential benefits include streamlined decision - making and improved infrastructure investment. However, concerns remain about the rapid timeline and democratic delays.

Concerns & Implications

- Speed of implementation seen as unrealistic.
 - Discretionary services (e.g. leisure centres, car parks) may shift to parish/town councils.
 - Business community faces uncertainty and potential disruption but also sees opportunities for economic growth.
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Actions:

- 11. Monitor Devon County Council's decision regarding the devolution proposal. SD
 - 12. Await updates from central government and Secretary of State regarding next steps. SD
 - 13. Ensure businesses are kept informed and engaged as the situation evolves.
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Salcombe Town Council (STC) - MG

Field of Light

- Ending on 10th January, but Bruce Munro has generously donated a smaller immersive light installation in Cross Park Gardens, to be unveiled later in January. Funds raised will go to the RNLI.

Town Clerk resignation

- Recruiting a new Town Clerk as Sara Jones is leaving on 5th March.
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Modbury Parish Council - BP | TP

Play Park Renewal

- Modbury's play park was in poor condition but has received a generous grant, covering most of the £10,000 needed for refurbishment.

Flood Defences

- TP reported that the flood defences installed around a decade ago have been highly effective.

Knitted Bollard Tops & Flags

- The decorative knitted bollard tops looked lovely but have now been removed, with plans to reinstall them in spring. The Kingsbridge bollard covers were also praised. Flags will be reinstalled on the High Street in Spring (with better weighting to prevent them blowing away!)

Church Lane Allotments

- The land was up for sale, threatening the allotments, but has been purchased by David Scott, who is placing it in a trust to benefit the church while ensuring the allotments remain for community use.

Local Businesses & Events

- Modbury's two pubs are thriving.
- The Christmas giveaway organised by local businesses was successful.
- The advent window trail was well received and is expected to return next year.
- Sam from Cool Beans café is keen to organise a music festival but missed this year's planning window. Chamber is keen to support out-of-season events, so Sam is encouraged to apply for funding via the Chamber website. Steve Mammatt from Kingsbridge Music Festival organisers may provide advice.

Insurance Issues

- The Parish Council faces challenges with event insurance, as each event currently requires separate cover, creating logistical difficulties.
- JG suggested that the Chamber could possibly help with this, potentially reducing costs and administrative burden. He encouraged organisers to get in touch, as collective insurance could simplify processes and provide more comprehensive coverage for events.

Parking Concerns

- Parking remains a major issue for Modbury, as local businesses rely on passing trade. The challenge of competing with supermarkets offering free parking was highlighted.
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Kingsbridge Town Council (KTC) - no representatives

Reported that Town Clerk, Martin Johnson, is stepping down so KTC are looking for a new Clerk.

4. Business Clubs

1. January Business Club

The January Business Club meeting will take place at Maha Bharat on Thursday 30th January.

Event Theme & Focus

Agenda will be shaped by current business concerns and trends. Three key themes have been proposed as New Year's Resolutions for Businesses:

1. Budgeting for 2025 - Helping businesses prepare for financial challenges, including national insurance increases and other economic shifts.
2. Being part of something bigger - The importance of collective business representation in the absence of local media and democratic changes.
3. AI in Everyday Business - Practical demonstrations on how AI can save time and money for small businesses, featuring real-world examples.

Possible additions

- Launch of the new Chamber Website - Highlighting new features such as the members' forum and exclusive offers.
 - Local Business Developments - Potential discussions on the Freeport initiative and its relevance to businesses.
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The emphasis will be on practical takeaways, ensuring attendees leave with actionable insights. The event will focus on concise presentations, interactive discussions, and valuable networking opportunities.

2. AGM Venue

- Committee discussed holding the summer AGM at Velarde instead of the usual solicitors' venue.
- NC suggested Velarde due to its indoor space, garden, and exhibition setup, making it a more appealing and less labour-intensive option. There was general agreement, with JS noting the venue's capacity should not be an issue, as it successfully hosted a larger event before.
- There was also interest in involving Mangetout for food and drinks, given their expanding presence in Kingsbridge.
- NC emphasised the importance of planning six months ahead to secure arrangements and gain local business support.
- Overall, there was strong support for the change, and planning will now move forward.

5. Treasurer's Report

1. Financial Statements

Report dated 31st December 2024

Account Balances

Current Account balance	£11,581.12	
(Modbury funds)	(£4,766.98)	
(Kingsbridge Traders)	(£2,573.00)	
Current Account Net Total	£4,241.14	
Deposit Account	£6,819.01	
Total Balance	£11,060.15	(November balance = £15,663.11)

Monthly Income/Expenditure Statement - as previously circulated.

Donations

Date	Beneficiary	Amount
24 March	KCC Jobs Board	£200.00
29 March	KB Easter Egg Hunt	£204.00
12 May	KB Classic Rallies	£200.00
	<i>Agreed 2024 donations limit</i>	<i>£1,450.00</i>
	<i>Current expenditure</i>	<i>(£604.00)</i>
	<i>Remaining balance</i>	<i>£846.00</i>

Financials:

- £1,200 income, £300 expenses for November.
- The **Salcombe Harbour Hotel event** brought in £852, with an invoice of £850, leaving a £2.50 profit.
- Discrepancies in attendance payments noted. **35 attendees** were expected, but **only 31 payments** were received; one Stripe payment was refused and a few unpaid.
- Further checks will be done to reconcile payments.

Subscription Increase:

- Annual fee increased from £65 to £70, as agreed at the AGM.
- Lack of prior communication led to **11 membership cancellations**. Many cancellations were from inactive members, but the chamber still aims to maintain quantity alongside quality.

Next Steps:

- A newsletter and/or email will address the increase transparently, explaining the rationale.
- Future price adjustments should be better communicated in advance.
- Recognition that previous fee increases were infrequent, making this adjustment overdue. Plans for incremental annual increases to align with inflation.

6. Ongoing Projects

Rebrand

- The South Hams Chamber rebrand is gaining traction this month.
- Marketing Manager to provide clear plan for review.
- The first channel where the new branding will be visible is the website.

Website

The Chamber aims to launch the rebranded website by the end of January, providing a valuable resource for members.

1. Content & Administration:

- The technical side of the website will be ready by 20th January.
 - Copywriting will be handled by Bradley ("Brad") Gerrard, a journalist, copywriter and Chamber member, offering his services at a reduced rate.
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- Administrative support is needed for transferring existing directory information. Juliet will assist with this.
- An updated member list is required to ensure only current members are included in the directory. NC to lead on this.

2. Additional Features:

- A members' forum has been built to support collaboration between businesses.
- Training will be provided for those managing events and forum discussions, with training videos and written guides being considered.

3. Transition from GoCardless to Stripe for handling membership payments

- The transition will involve updating member details, managing payment renewals, and ensuring ongoing direct debit functionality.
 - Member Data Management**
 - Obtain an up-to-date list of members (NC to provide).
 - Juliet to input member details into the website's member directory.
 - Add members manually for the first cycle, ensuring their details are correct.
 - Payment System Transition**
 - 1st payment cycle to be manual. SBa to add existing members with their current renewal dates.
 - At renewal, members will need to input their payment details.
 - Stripe supports direct debits - preferred to prevent subs expiring with card expiry dates.
 - Communication Strategy**
 - KW to develop and implement a comms plan for members, to include (e.g.):
 - Initial announcement: Explain the transition and why it's happening.
 - Reminder emails before renewal: Automated emails to members ahead of their renewal date, prompting them to enter payment details.
 - Final deadline notices: For members who haven't updated details, ensuring minimal attrition.
 - Renewal Strategy & Deadlines**
 - Option 1: **Individual renewals** - Members update details at their own renewal date.
 - Option 2: **Fixed transition date** (e.g. November) - All members given a set period before a hard deadline.
 - Hybrid approach may be needed to accommodate new members who join throughout the year.
 - Key Considerations - SBa to:**
 - Test Stripe's direct debit functionality to avoid subscriptions lapsing due to card expiry.
 - Set up automated alerts for expiring payment details.
 - Minimise disruption and attrition by making the transition as seamless as possible.

Actions:

14. KW to draft marketing plan for approval.	KW
15. Ensure content is ready by 20th January.	JS/BG
16. Provide training resources for committee members and administrators.	SBa
17. Provide current member list for directory integration.	NC
18. Test Stripe can support ongoing direct debits without card expiry issues.	SBa
19. Training videos and written guides to be created for committee/admin users.	SBa
20. Decide on a renewal strategy (individual vs. fixed date).	All
21. Test automation of renewal reminders before full rollout.	SBa
22. Develop communication materials (emails, FAQs) to guide members through the process.	KW

Jobs Board

- The conversation revolved around the South Hams Jobs Board and how it connects to the South Hams Employment Fair, with an emphasis on increasing employer engagement and improving promotion efforts. The key concern is that the jobs board relies on businesses actively posting vacancies, but there has been a drop in new adverts since November.
- The goal is to reinvigorate the jobs board and use the employment fair as a platform to drive further engagement.

Current status

- The jobs board has seen little activity since a surge in November, likely due to seasonal hiring for Christmas.
- SBa confirmed that job applications go directly to businesses, so tracking success is difficult.
- The goal is to increase job postings and make the board a key recruitment tool for the local community.

Key issues

- The jobs board relies on businesses posting vacancies and engagement from businesses has been low. Many businesses may have forgotten it exists or do not see it as a useful tool, unlike traditional job listing methods (e.g., the Gazette).
- School involvement needs clarity. Alice, who was expected to be involved in managing the board, has not logged in, raising questions about who is overseeing it. Tina Graham has been involved but is there a clear person responsible for day-to-day operations?
- The school originally planned to promote the jobs board, especially for work experience placements, but this has not been fully realised. The board will be more valuable to students as placements become available again (students need vacancies to apply for, or they will disengage).

Website Integration

- The Jobs Board will have a prominent link on the new Chamber website, making it more accessible. Improved design should make it easier for businesses to submit vacancies.

Marketing

- While the board has been mentioned in some forums, it needs a strong, sustained marketing push.
- The business club event referenced the jobs board, but some attendees were unaware of it.
- The Chamber and school need to work together more effectively to continuously promote it to employers.
- More direct marketing materials are needed, not just verbal promotion at events.

Next Steps

1. Committee agreed to **invite Tina Graham (and team) to March Business Club** meeting to present a short 'hot spot' talk on the jobs board's importance to reinforce to businesses why they should use it AND remind the school to take a more active role in ensuring students have opportunities.
2. **Visual & Printed Marketing Strategies**
 - a. Demonstrate the jobs board on a big screen at Employment Fair (and other events)
 - b. Create a simple, clear flyer, e.g., "Looking to hire? Post your jobs here!" including link to the jobs board, step-by-step instructions for employers to submit listings & QR code for easy access.
 - c. JS to print and distribute flyers at key business events.
3. **Use the Employment Fair to promote Jobs Board** - businesses attending the fair should be informed about the jobs board and encouraged to use it.
 - a. The fair marketing materials should also mention the jobs board.
 - b. Ensure that marketing efforts after the fair remind businesses that the board is a long-term recruitment resource.
4. **Increase visibility** - Marketing manager to prioritise getting these messages out consistently across different channels.

Actions

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| 23. Send reminder emails to local businesses. | KW |
| 24. Promote the jobs board in social media posts & newsletters. | KW |
| 25. Include it in every business meeting moving forward. | All |
| 26. March Business Club meeting - Invite Tina Graham & team from the school and use the meeting to demonstrate the jobs board and highlight its importance. | JS/SB |
| 27. Print & distribute flyers with job board details. | JS/KW |
| 28. Showcase the jobs board at events with a live demo. | SBa |
| 30. Boost Employment Fair marketing - integrate jobs board promotion into the jobs fair campaign and ensure all businesses attending know about and are encouraged to use the board. | KW |

South Hams Employment Fair

- Taking place at KCC on Thursday 20th February 2025, from 1.30pm to 6.15pm [Details here](#)
- Will feature employer stalls, CV workshops, apprenticeship hub, networking, guest speakers.
- Continue to promote across digital and print platforms to engage members, local businesses, KCC etc.

SHDC Business Spaces

- SHDC's Chris Brooke initially accepted an invitation to discuss concerns, but no follow-up response has been received, suggesting waning interest in engagement.
- There was a recent meeting involving representatives from South Hams District Council (SHDC) and Salcombe Town Council, but it is unclear whether the concerns were fully addressed. The Chamber, which requested the meeting, was not invited.
- Issues were raised about the handling of the tendering process for Gould Road business units, with concerns that standard procedures were disregarded.

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- SHDC has acknowledged that the current policy on business space allocation is outdated, but no clear timeline has been set for its review.
 - JS flagged a conflict of interest, leading to a temporary pause in discussions approximately 6 weeks.
 - There was previous consideration of media coverage to highlight concerns, but this has not progressed. It has been suggested that the Chamber may need to push harder once the conflict of interest period has passed.
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Actions:

31. Issue to be removed from the agenda for now, with plans to revisit it in a couple of months once the conflict is resolved and policy reviews progress.
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7. The month ahead

Building Committee

- JS suggested inviting Brad Gerrard to join, given his media background and influence. Brad is a freelance journalist licensed as one of the BBC's County correspondents and has a strong connection to the industry, despite not covering the committee's specific area. His experience could fill the gap left since the Gazette's departure 6 or 7 years ago, providing valuable media support.
 - JS highlighted that Brad's work is funded by the BBC and syndicated for wider use. SB noted the potential benefit to Kim's marketing role. While Brad's willingness to contribute beyond website content is uncertain, his expertise could help generate articles. No objections were raised to inviting him.
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Action:

32. JS to invite Brad to join Committee.

JS

7. AOB

1. Membership | Administrative Support - *ongoing*
 2. Tesco Planning application
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Date of next meeting: Wednesday 5th February 2025
