

Welcome everyone to the 2019 Weymouth & Portland Chamber of Commerce AGM

First of all I would just like to thank everybody for coming tonight and to those of you who have come specifically to offer support to me as I step into shoes that have effortlessly held up the who has enjoyed the Presidency role over the last two years. I want to thank Andrew Knowles for ensuring that the Chamber of Commerce has continued to evolve and has continued to do what it does best. It has been a pleasure and an honour to support him.

As I take over this role I am all too aware that this particular year could be regarded as being one with many pitfalls ahead particularly in the business arena not only locally but globally as well.

Of course I talk of the merging of our councils and the forming of Dorset Council as one and further on from that Brexit. Personally I see both of these situations as an opportunity for us as a Chamber to give more support than ever to our businesses and by working with other Chambers closely through our affiliation with The Dorset Chambers and in turn The British Chambers organisation.

Very early on in the Brexit negotiations with the EU we learnt directly from Ronan Quigley, Executive Director of British Chambers at the Chamber Conference that the government was being supported by British Chambers and were helping with vital trade information that is only obtained through 100's of years of experience of Chambers trading around the world with other countries, international companies and organisations. I believe that the British Chamber's stance is currently that of a Brexit with a meaningful deal. The Chamber of Commerce at the moment with so much uncertainty is not a bad place to be.

As a Chamber, the working together of businesses is paramount. Locally we are on the cusp of a High Street rescue project from the Government which is literally being rolled out as we speak and was hinted at late last year, when Jake Berry, the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, visited Weymouth & Portland in the Pavilion Piano Room, and isn't the Pavilion looking amazing by the way?

Jake Berry saw such potential in our area but he also said we need to know what we want to be as an area; Do we want to be a tourist town? Do we want to be industrial? Do we want to be technological? Once we can work out what we want to be, we can then ask as one in one voice and we will be heard and investment in this area will be much more likely. I agree with him to a certain extent and looking around here tonight. I see all three areas represented and I see businesses prospering and I see opportunities appearing everyday.

The Eden Project plans to change Portland for ever in a truly fantastic way and this will only enhance the businesses that have chosen to operate from the island, whether it be traditional local pubs like the Eight Kings, who won two trophies at the well received Star Awards

we held here at Weymouth College last year, or world renowned firms based in and around Portland such as Tods Defence, M&N Electrical, Sunseeker, O,Three, Agincare and others.

We have within Weymouth a tourism industry which is second to none and people come from every corner of the planet to see what we have to offer and we have businesses that play to this strength. We also have a growing industrial area that continues to build and create more and more new business and employment for the area. Technology thrives in Weymouth & Portland across the board from various pockets you only have to scratch the surface.

Yes we can get better and yes it takes a bit of patience. From a Chamber point of view, we continue to stand up for local businesses because we know that it underpins what makes Weymouth & Portland flow, and that is an amalgamation of many different businesses and quality institutions with a diverse set of employees and varied training and skills opportunities such as work placement, apprenticeship and flexible employment if people require it, or stable gainful employment or self-employment if they don't.

So to Jake Berry, I say Jake, we are a borough of one voice with one message we want prosperity and this can be achieved with a mix of the businesses that operate in Weymouth & Portland.

As Chamber members all you need to do is look around and see that, you are as business owners and managers part of something that is very unique and special, an area that has many different useful parts to it, and that we all have the same common goal to live and work in an area where we can all be different but we all want the same thing an business community that flourishes.

I look forward to serving you and will always work hard to keep the best interests of the Weymouth & Portland Chamber of Commerce first. To that end all I ask is that if we arrange events like the breakfast meetings and other extra curricular opportunities, please give them a go.

You have working for you voluntarily this year a varied and enthusiastic Executive Committee and I am very proud to be working with them. They all have different backgrounds and all bring their own experiences to our table. If you have chosen to be on the Exec please can you stand up.

I am President in name only. I am equal. The Chamber of Commerce will continue to be the strong organisation it is only if everyone plays their role.

Don't forget, as if that could be entirely possible given my attire. As part of The President's challenge which I am launching this year. I have teamed up with Zone Fitness and this year's President's chosen charity Weldmar, which we all know is a charity that has helped so many people locally and has made so many that little bit more comfortable in the twilight of their lives.

I will be in Zone Fitness when I can. Depending on how much you donate, specific mini challenges can be arranged. The Harbour Swim at Christmas which I intend to do should help raise extra funds for a great cause. A Just Giving page will be up on the Chamber website very soon.

I wish you all a fantastic and successful year and urge you to look at the businesses around you not just tonight but day to day and see if you can engage with them and help each other out. Thank you for listening and enjoy the rest of your evening.