

## Watton Town Meeting report 2018 - The Wayland Chamber of Commerce

The Wayland Chamber of Commerce has served businesses across our area for many years and we are now one of only a few town centre Chamber of Commerces left in the UK. However Like last year it has generally been quite difficult to engage with businesses – both in terms of getting them to attend meetings and to participate in initiatives in the town but our small committee is working hard to try and rectify this and we have been encouraged by the inclusion of two of the counties larger businesses as representatives on this committee.

Hopefully you will have all now received your Chamber Directory which was first produced back in 1982. The directory is an invaluable source of local information for Wayland residents and provides our businesses with a unique platform to reach over 9000 homes. As expansion and house building continues apace in both Watton and the surrounding villages the directory is also a great way to make contact with those who have moved to the area.

In these days of almost instant online connections to be found on the web and through social media, there may be some who question the need for a printed directory but our feedback has shown that a real hands-on source of information is still very much used in our community. As such we are now redesigning our website so that it provides even more information about our businesses and gives them more opportunities to connect with potential customers in the Wayland area – the work should be complete by the end of May so watch this space.

This last year we have been involved in:

- Taken part in the Engaging Communities Open Day at Queens Hall in May and will be doing so again this year on 20<sup>th</sup> June
- Given financial sponsorship to Blossom and Yarn, Watton Carnival and Watton Museum and the Wayland Memory Cafe
- Attended the Wayland Partnership Business Showcase Event in September 2017.
- Run promotions for Small Business Saturday 25th November and been involved in the Christmas Window Competition
- Trialled a new early evening networking forum “Chamber chat”.
- For the first time in our history we were represented at the Royal Norfolk Show, taking space in the Buy Local Norfolk marquee. Members were given the chance to display their leaflets on our stand which generated a great deal of interest. Buy Local Norfolk is a similar membership organisation to the Chamber and is committed to helping publicise the diverse number of local businesses that serve our beautiful county. I’m please to say that we will be exhibiting again at the show again this year. If you would like to come along and help us staff the stand for a couple of hours then please get in touch!

In the coming year we will continue to support our local businesses in the best way that we can – but that support needs to go both ways. We are not alone in having very small numbers coming to our events and are always looking at new ways of engaging with and helping people – so if you have any ideas we would love to hear from you. Our committee meets once a month at 5.30 at Wayland High School in the library and we would love to see any members there!

As well as attending the Norfolk Show we are will be holding two workshops on the dreaded GDPR on Thursday 26th April. The first will run from 12.00 ~~1~~.30pm the second from 6.30 ~~8~~.00pm at Wayland House. These will be free for members to give an overview of the new GDPR regulations and what businesses need to do to comply. Sessions are open to non-members at a cost of £5.00 per person. You can find out more and book online by visiting our website.

Finally I must say a few word about Richard Crabtree who many of you will know sadly passed away in November last year. Richard as a committee member and as chair of the Wayland Chamber over many years. He gave a great deal of experience and time to us and to many other initiatives in the area and his input will be sorely missed at our committee meetings.