

Chamber Chatter

The Voice of local business in Taunton Deane

March 2011

TAUNTON
CHAMBER
of
COMMERCE



NOTICE of Annual General Meeting

You are cordially invited to the

Annual General Meeting

of the
Taunton Chamber of Commerce

at Mr Miles Tea Rooms, High Street,
Taunton

on **WEDNESDAY 27th April 2011**

5.30 for 6.00pm

Light Refreshments available —
cheese & wine & nibbles

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Members and Guests Welcome

MARCH

THURS 24th March

**Business Breakfast with Pardoes Solicitors
in support of St. Margaret's Somerset
Hospice**

**Guest Speaker - Richard Gould, CEO,
Somerset County Cricket Club - "Somerset
- a proper Cricket Club?"**

Booking form attached

MON 11th April

**Networking Lunch at Exchange House
In association with TDBC**

**"Future Development of Taunton Deane to
2028"**

Booking Form attached

APRIL

Weds 27th April -

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**At Mr Miles tea rooms, High Street, Taunton
Further details and booking form to follow**

**For further information or to book a place at any
of these events, please contact Jane, Chamber
Administrator on 01823 353353 or
email: office@taunton-chamber.co.uk**

Paperwork: Help or Hindrance?

For many businesses paperwork is a necessary evil. From Lawyers to Accountants, Recruitment to Car Sales, paperwork is simply another aspect of the job, albeit one that requires us to dedicate vast areas to storage and time to administration.

To help firms better understand the legal requirements of both the ethical and legal challenges of paperwork, Taunton Chamber of Commerce and prominent regional law firm Porter Dodson hosted a breakfast seminar at Porter Dodson's Blackbrook office on Wednesday 16th February.

Stephen Wray, Partner and Head of the Firm's Dispute Resolution Team, outlined the requirements of companies to keep documentation for future reference and to assist in future disputes. Stephen commented "We give advice and we keep a record of that advice... every phone call, every meeting, every piece of paper... the better the paperwork, the better your chances of success in any particular case" Commenting on what constitutes a document, Stephen advised everything that can contain information should be treated as one, from letters to emails, from Post-It notes to text messages.

Michael Pitt, Partner, is responsible for maintaining the firm's compliance to the regulations of the FSA and other external quality and audit procedures. His advice to the seminar attendees was to keep work and personal phones separate and to "capture text messages on all work Blackberrys and mobile phones."

No matter what industry or business you represent, it is important to understand statutory and recommended retention periods, your duty of disclosure and your responsibility for conducting a reasonable search for documents should a dispute arise.

In summary, whilst paperwork may be time consuming and at times overwhelming, it may also be a lifeline should litigation occur.

This event was one of a series regularly organised by Taunton Chamber of Commerce in partnership with local businesses to help promote networking and business development and to provide training and professional support to local businesses.



Fire Safety – What Business Owners Need To Know

A cautionary tale for business owners - there have been a number of prosecutions recently under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order:

- An inspection of a company's factory premises found a number of shortcomings Including:
 - an inadequate fire risk assessment;
 - no emergency plan;
 - no evidence of fire safety training for staff;
 - no fire protection to first-floor escape route;
 - windows to escape route were not fire resistant

An enforcement notice was issued under which the company was required to remedy the faults. They did not correct all the problems and the company was fined £14,000 and ordered to pay £6,300 costs.

- A landlord was prosecuted for a number of breaches under the Order. A routine audit of his property (the top two floors of which had been converted into flats) identified a number of safety failures including:
 - blocked escape route;
 - locked fire escapes;
 - inadequate fire alarm system

The landlord pleaded guilty and the court heard that he failed to understand his fire safety responsibilities as a landlord to assess risks adequately. The landlord was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £2,500 costs.

- Following a serious fire at his premises and the necessity for fire crews to rescue two occupants trapped on the upper floors of the premises, a restaurant owner was prosecuted for 10 breaches of the Order including:
 - allowing people to sleep in the premises without having adequate means of escape;
 - not having a fire alarm;
 - not having a fire detection system;
 - not having any emergency lighting;
 - not having any fire extinguishers

The restaurant owner pleaded guilty and was fined £15,000 with £754 costs.

These are all relatively easy fixes so don't get caught out - for a series of guides for different business sectors check out "Fire and Resilience" on the Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk/fire.

The absence of a fire risk assessment may prejudice your insurance. Insurance companies impose an obligation to comply with such statutory requirements. There have been instances of insurers refusing to pay out claims in the absence of such risk assessments. A landlord relying on a tenant to do so under the terms of the lease ought to check that the obligation has been complied with. A claim against a tenant where the liability has been passed to them and an insurer has refused to meet a claim may not provide much comfort if the tenant lacks financial strength.

For further information please contact Bruce Weir or Stephen Wray at Porter Dodson on 01823 625800.

Taunton's Highest Profile offices?

Taunton's premier office location is offering the final office plots to businesses in the region. Blackbrook Business Park has been developed out by **Summerfield Developments** since the 1990's and is home to many of Taunton's finest names; WPA, Viridor, BSI, **Clarke Willmott**, **A C Mole**, **RBS**, **Foot Anstey**, **Porter Dodson** and **Ashfords** to name a few.

The plots can accommodate a combination of office buildings, and Summerfield are looking to deliver for occupiers requiring office accommodation of 5,000 to 35,000 sq ft (465 to 3,252 sq m). Ben Trickey of Summerfield Developments (SW) Ltd commented, "This is a chance for businesses wanting a high profile location adjacent to the M5 motorway to come forward with their interest. Blackbrook is the chosen location for many of the region's business success stories and the high profile and easy access of the business park has played a part in their decision to locate here."



He went on to add, "Summerfield can either design and build offices specifically for a company or we will adapt the existing plans to an occupier's needs."

Most of Blackbrook has been built out with the Pub, hotel and offices. These remaining plots offer a limited number of businesses the chance to locate conveniently for the regional road network and benefit from the high profile visibility from the motorway. A headquarter or multiple occupier 21,000 sq ft office is planned along with two 6,000 sq ft detached offices.

King Sturge and **Alder King** are the agents acting on Blackbrook for Summerfield, or enquirers can contact Summerfield directly.

NEWS AND EVENTS



Somerset College

They're the best!

Judges from a wide range of industries took part in Somerset College's first Skills Competition recently, when hundreds of students took part in over 35 competitions across the campus.

It was the first such event at the College, set to become an annual highlight, and students worked hard to win gold, silver and bronze placements in everything from brickwork to web design. They received trophies and certificates at a special College award ceremony.

The external judges were invited from different sectors of industry and, along with College Governors, were impressed by the high calibre of student work.

The aim of the Skills Competition was to create greater awareness of top level skills and encourage students' awareness of competitions at regional and national level that can lead on to the international WorldSkills competitions. These, which have been likened to skills 'Olympics,' are where top young people from across the globe compete in their chosen skill.



Blazing the trail for Green Energy

Somerset College and partners are blazing a trail in spreading the word about green energy.

A pilot training programme to help energy advisors educate the public about renewable technologies and energy saving, was recently launched at the College's Genesis Centre in Taunton. The South West Energy Advice pilot training programme is being run jointly by Somerset and Cornwall Colleges, and Asset Skills (the Sector Skills Council for Facilities Management and Property). It is funded through Universities South West with South West Regional Development Agency funding.

Thirty adult learners, all working and with backgrounds in energy assessment, attended the launch and initial training seminar at The Genesis Centre. The programme will then continue for six months with an innovative blend of online and face to face learning. The programme is the first to offer a Level 3 certificate in Energy Advice with a Level 4 award in Renewable Technologies. It will equip learners to provide comprehensive energy advice and is set to offer a significant number of the skills required to meet new legislation emerging in the Government's Green Deal.

The South West Energy Advice programme will pave the way for similar projects in Wales and Northern Ireland over the coming months.



Chamber Members supporting Young Enterprise

Chamber Members, Craftasmic and Taunton Rugby Club recently joined forces to support Young Enterprise South West with their recent event.



James Hembrow, Director of Craftasmic, was approached by Taunton Chamber of Commerce to be involved in the Young Enterprise Eco Toy Challenge which took place at Taunton Rugby Club in February. James gave a presentation based on his knowledge of setting up a new business and drawing from his background of creative design within the leisure industry. Students from Somerset College learnt about coming up with conceptual ideas, starting a design, marketing and promotion before being set the challenge of designing an educational, eco friendly toy or game for children. To start them off, James demonstrated models from the Timberkit range stocked by Craftasmic.

James said "The concepts illustrated in Timberkit wooden automatons are part of the National Curriculum so are an ideal example to use. Craftasmic are a member of Taunton Chamber of Commerce and I am very pleased to have been asked to be involved. I took part in Young Enterprise at school and thoroughly enjoyed it. It's a very worthwhile scheme, particularly being charity based and a great way to learn about business and industry."

James then helped to judge the best entry and Craftasmic kindly donated gift vouchers for the winning team members.

Our thanks to both Craftasmic and Taunton Rugby Club for their support of Young Enterprise.



ELDERLY CLIENTS IN SOMERSET TO BENEFIT FROM LEGAL SPECIALIST

32 YEAR OLD Rachel Oaten from Chard has joined Somerset's leading law firm, Pardoes as an Associate Legal Executive in the 'Private Client' department.

Pardoes

Her role will involve arranging wills, probate and estate administration and tax planning for existing and new Pardoes Clients. She also deals with Powers of Attorney and Court of Protection work as this is the area of law that is key for clients in their elder years.

Rachel is delighted to be working at Pardoes. 'The firm has an excellent reputation for being the best in the south west' she commented. 'I have lived in Somerset all my life and am hugely committed to the area. I'm delighted to be part of a team that is dedicated to providing a cutting edge legal service to the local community.'

Rachel's particular passion since entering the legal profession some 16 years ago is acting on behalf of the older generation, advising on such issues as mental health, asset management and care home fee planning. Her objective is to make Pardoes this sector of society's first choice for such issues.

'The beautiful south west attracts a huge number of retired people and it is a fact of life that this generation will constitute a major proportion of our client base. As such, we need to be leaders in the field and bang up to date on all current legislation in order that we can successfully meet their needs'.

Rachel already has an impressive track record working on behalf of the elderly, her most recent success seeing an NHS Continued Care Funding claim against a local Primary Care Trust. Rachel's efforts resulted in over 3 years' care home fees being refunded to the client and all ongoing care costs being covered by the NHS.

Very often clients are not given the information they require, in terms of funding available and what costs will be covered by the State. Rachel has specialist knowledge in elderly client benefits and enjoys being able to assist clients when they decide it's time to move on to the next chapter of their life, making the transition from their property into assisted living, or residential/nursing, care.

As a team member of Pardoes, Rachel will continue to play an active role in her profession. Already an Associate Member of the Institute of Legal Executives and Branch Treasurer for the Somerset Branch of the Institute of Legal Executives, Rachel plans to enrol as a Student Member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners. She currently arranges regular training Courses for fellow Legal Executive colleagues.



roundedpr



Taunton Chamber member Matt Rowntree has launched the website for his business: Rounded PR.

The website includes details on the kind of support Rounded PR can offer (media relations, strategic planning, events support, social media management and so much more – see the website for details!), as well as his Twitter feed and blog pages where he ponders on changes and developments in the world of public relations, life in the west country having moved here from London, and being a family man.

The site will be updated regularly with case studies of his work as well so lots of reasons to go back regularly.

And don't forget – if you're interested to know what PR can do for your business, Matt offers a one-hour free consultation to meet and discuss how PR can help your business grow.

Find the website at: www.roundedpr.com

TAUNTON CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE welcomes
returning Member:-

NTS Webco, Taunton

Chamber of Commerce Publications
kindly sponsored by:-



MAIL BOXES ETC.®

Print and Copy
Services

7 Bridge St. Taunton
Tel: 08000 978897
Email: info@mbetaunton.co.uk

To contact us:

call: **01823 353353**

Email: office@taunton-chamber.co.uk

Write to: **First Floor, 12F Fore Street, The Orchard Centre, Taunton**

TA1 3TP

Data Protection

The Chamber has your details held in a database that has been compiled from volunteered information.

If you no longer wish to receive E-communications from the Chamber please email Jane Burden. We will continue to hold your remaining details unless you specifically indicate otherwise in writing.

If you would like a colleague to receive these e-mails direct, please let us have their details and we will add them to our database.