



The Wotton-under-Edge Chamber of Trade and Commerce is a business development and networking group, including retail and commercial businesses, sole traders and public limited companies.

We are committed to developing our rural market town to its true potential. We are positive, self-motivated and work in partnership with other organisations to enhance our community and ensure that Wotton-Under-Edge thrives in today's very tough economy. We have regular meetings to decide our way forward, our priorities and to review our progress. It is essential as a business group that we stay relevant and forward thinking to help our members.

During the year I have attended many meetings at Gloucester University which is the operating base for gfirstLEP (Gloucestershire First Local Enterprise Partnership). I also attend meetings of their Business and Retail and Tourism groups: networking with other business leaders to help them better understand the challenges to our local businesses.

Again last year the Chamber helped the Christmas under the Edge group although in a much smaller way than previous years. Unfortunately Nikki and Sonia who have done a fantastic job have decided to stand aside and let someone else organise the event. Hopefully it will be able to run this year and if that is the case the Chamber has decided to take the lead and run the event for the town.

Last summer I became a Town Councillor having attended many council meetings in the previous couple of years to better understand the workings of local government. I am really enjoying it and hope that my experiences from around the country during my working life are contributing to the work of the council.



The last year has been a tough one for grants. Money has not been as available as in previous years and we only succeeded in getting grants of £9,800 which was way down on last year. However they were well received and appreciated by the businesses who benefitted. Going forward this year I think money will be even tighter and harder to come by.

I am sitting here 5 weeks into the lockdown for COVID-19 thinking how all our lives have changed in a matter of days. I would like to pay tribute to all of the businesses who have carried on opening and diversified to meet their customers' new and emerging needs. Special thanks must go to the shops going over and above their normal operations: the baker and butcher who changed their business models to ensure that bread or meat is in good supply and delivered to the surrounding area, the produce team packing up fruit and vegetable boxes to be collected and delivered all around the area and the Wotton Area Mutual Aid group doing amazing work supporting people locally in this unprecedented time. What an amazing community we live in.

I am in awe of the staff in our town shops: be they the owner or an employee who do not know whether the next person they serve has COVID-19. For once you can say they are risking their lives serving us all every day. We are so lucky to have such fantastic people in our town!

There are of course many businesses that are closed and their staff furloughed. It will be very tough on those businesses when they are allowed to re-open so please **Shop Local, Eat Local, Spend Local, Enjoy Local.**

Please think about our local Businesses. If we do not support them when life returns to whatever normal becomes, they may not be here in the future. Five weeks ago, we would never have predicted our lives now. If we don't support the local businesses that are supporting us and our community and are caring and working hard for us, they might not be here to support us if the need arises again

Martin Tucker
President
Wotton-under-Edge Chamber of Trade and Commerce

