BUSINESS WEST INCORPORATED

CHAIR'S REPORT

Introduction

In completing my third year as Chair of the Business West Business Association, I would firstly like to thank the board for their ongoing efforts in supporting the association's mission to support unity and growth for businesses in the west. I am especially mindful that board members have their own businesses to run and the fact that they give so freely of their time is deeply appreciated.

During the year we were sorry to lose the services of Tom Wolfenden from the Board. We were equally delighted to welcome Isabelle Stacy from MTF to the BWBA board.

I would also like to extend appreciation on behalf of the board to Garry Bates, and his team who work tirelessly throughout the year to drive the events and projects underpinning our strategic direction.

With one week left until the General Election, it only to be expected that this breeds a level of uncertainty. The economic state of the country has not been without its surprises this last year. Speaking to many businesses on the lead up to the Christmas period, together with analyst commentaries, the general sentiment was that that the early signs of economic turnaround were appearing, and the austerity measures in government spending were starting to deliver a result. This was evident through the significant cooling of inflationary pressure and bank borrowing rates.

Of course, this confidence was rocked when events in the Middle East spilt over causing initial uncertainty on oil supplies and sharp increases in the pump prices of diesel and petrol. Whilst the government was able to demonstrate leadership in terms of ensuring fuel supplies were uninterrupted, we are at the whim of market forces and are likely to see volatility in fuel prices for some months to come as there are still no definitive signs of the unrest coming to an end.

So, what has the association been doing?

At last years AGM, I highlighted the 5 key areas of strategic intent for the association.
We continue to expend effort and make progress in the following areas of importance:

- Security
- Engagement
- Education
- Diversity
- Social Responsibility

We have stayed on this course as we fundamentally believe they are still the right areas to be focussing time and investment.

Security:

Efforts have been made to further deepen relationships between the Police and other stakeholders who have a vested interest in ridding the BID area of crime and nuisance behaviour.

The association has continued to fund security guard patrols, and in the coming year not only will we be continuing this programme, but we will deepen the reach of the patrols to ensure a more uniform coverage.

We came into this last year committed to further expanding our surveillance capability, however whilst optimistic that the hopeless impasses that we had encountered last year might have been resolved, it is with a high degree of frustration that I report that our efforts have continued to be hampered by heavy-handed and unnecessary bureaucracy. We are still waiting to see the mayor's directive to limit AT CCO status and remit to that of public transport services only.

To elaborate on the headwinds we have been battling, it is interesting to note that to date, some 40 council and AT personnel have been involved or had the plight of our phase 2 surveillance plans referred to them, whilst all the while there has been a diminishing level of traction and success. I can assure members that we remain committed to investing in a BID-wide surveillance capability and the provision of security and safety to our member businesses remains a key priority.

Engagement:

We are delighted to see attendance numbers at the monthly BA5 (Business After 5) continuing to grow, and particularly the number of new members coming along to this event. This last year there have been 8 BA5 evening events. These events of course would not be possible without the ongoing support of our 11 loyal sponsor businesses, and we thank them for ensuring the continuation of this now legendary networking event that allows business owners, managers and staff to come together.

During the year it was our pleasure to host 3 successful breakfast events, featuring keynotes from Tony Alexander, Shane Jones and Brad Olsen. We will be back this coming year with more of this valuable information sharing and networking opportunities.

Last year we had just ushered in the delivery of the of BWBA's new website and member communication platform. It is heartening to see that 1 year in, there are currently some 250+ member businesses registered. Ongoing enhancement, information, additional functionality, and services will continue to be added for the benefit of members.

Education:

To ensure we help local businesses with upkeeping their Health & Safety programmes, we successfully engaged First Training to complete both refresher and new first aider training and certification programmes. This last year there have been 3 further sessions successfully completed, with each session being fully subscribed to the 20-student maximum. These sessions were held at the premises of long-time sponsor Davis Funerals.

We will be continuing this programme in the coming year and welcome feedback from members on other aspects of training and development that would be considered useful.

In October of this year, we do have an introduction of AI to your business workshop planned.

Diversity:

Anika Millington continues to build momentum for the Connect Her programme. Throughout the year, regular CA5 events have been held, and it is encouraging to see these networking events continuing to grow with attendance at each being between 55 to 75 attendees. The inaugural “Connect Her” conference took place in Auckland in November. Attended by some 60 delegates, the event including keynote speaker Toni Street was an absolute success. The association is committed to ensuring that the invaluable and growing contribution that women make to business is recognised and supported.

CSR:

Whilst the Business Association exists for the purposes of supporting business, business doesn’t succeed without people. We are delighted to have the involvement of Hospice West Auckland at our events and to of course provide updates and information and encourage members to support the invaluable work that Hospice West Auckland carry out in the community every day. Support can be financial through donations or through engaging in volunteer activities to help fundraise, or through other hand on activities e.g. supporting the teams operating the hospice shops (a great company team building opportunity).

In conclusion, whilst we continue to live in challenging times, and the coming year will no doubt continue to keep us guessing as we wait to see what form an incoming government will take, and what course of economic direction the country is set on. Regardless, the Association remains committed to supporting all member businesses in the BID.

Wishing you the best in health and business

Michael Powell

Chair Business West