

Press release - 04.03.10

Hampshire chambers of commerce vote for the power of three

Businesses across Hampshire are to have a single countywide chamber of commerce for the first time.

Members of Southampton & Fareham Chamber sealed the historic move in a unanimous vote at an extraordinary general meeting today.

The decision followed overwhelming votes in favour by Hampshire's two other chambers, Portsmouth & South East Hampshire and North Hampshire.

The new body, Hampshire Chamber, will be one of the UK's biggest regional business networks.

It will have a combined membership of more than 2,000 individual firms spanning all sectors and sizes of business.

Captain Jimmy Chestnutt, Director General of Southampton & Fareham Chamber, said: "This is excellent news for businesses in Southampton and throughout the county. There are tremendous benefits in combining the resources of the three chambers to improve the quality of all our activities and services.

"The new chamber will give members a much stronger voice and greater networking opportunities. As a countywide body, its sheer size will make it a force to be reckoned with."

Existing members of the three local chambers will automatically become members of Hampshire Chamber from the start of the new financial year in April.

They will remain affiliated to their local chamber office and have access to the same services and support as now, but their membership fee will also open up a countywide package of events, networking, training and lobbying services.

Under the merger, chamber staff will remain in post but may by agreement change responsibilities during the first year of trading as Hampshire Chamber.

The existing Southampton office, Bugle House, where today's vote took place, will be retained along with the other local offices such as in Basingstoke, Portsmouth and Winchester.

Hampshire Chamber will have a new countywide members' magazine and a single-access website designed with new branding.

While each local chamber will keep a distinct local identity within Hampshire Chamber, the plan is to merge all activities and services under a single management structure by the end of the first year of trading.

Editor's note

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