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March 2026

This Issue

- 1 From the President
- 2 Annual Subscriptions
- 3 Quiz Night
- 4 Hanging Baskets
- 5 Late Payments to Small Businesses
- 6 Snippets

1. From the President

Welcome to the March edition of Chamber Chat as our new session gets well and truly underway. We have the Quiz Night coming up shortly (25th April) as our first gathering and it would be good to see plenty of members supporting the event and vying for the top spot and the kudos that goes with it! Full details below in Item 3.

You will no doubt have had your Business Rates bills landing on your doorstep recently. The business rates relief scheme is less generous under this government than in recent years, so many will no doubt have seen a significant increase. Coupled with the double whammy of increased National Insurance contributions and greatly enhanced minimum wage costs from last April, it's yet another cost to be absorbed (thus reducing profitability) or passed on to customers.

If that's not enough we now have the uncertainty surrounding the Iran War and what impact that will have on energy costs as the year progresses. I know many businesses have fixed tariff plans with their suppliers, so the immediate impact may well be cushioned for some. But of course, oil price rises feed into many strands of business operation, not least transport costs. So I think we can look forward to some price rises too as that kicks in. On that uplifting note, I hope you have a lovely Easter break if you are able to manage one.

2. Annual Subscriptions

A FINAL reminder that **Annual Subscriptions** became due on 1st February. The formal subscription invoice accompanied the AGM pack distributed to members mid-January. The vast majority of members have already renewed, but here's a gentle reminder for those few still to do so!

😊 Speedy payment by those still to pay will be much appreciated. If you've misplaced your invoice and need another, please let the Secretary know (secretary@boroughbridgect.co.uk).

A further reminder also to check your entry on the Chamber Website Members' Business Directory at www.boroughbridgect.co.uk/directory. Ensure you are happy with your entry, that it is accurate, describes your business appropriately and is up to date. Check your contact details, and if you use Social Media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc) check that all relevant ones are showing. Please advise of any updates/changes you would like to be made to secretary@boroughbridgect.co.uk

3. Quiz Night

The next Chamber **Quiz Night** will take place on **Saturday 25th April** at The Crown Hotel Boroughbridge, 7pm start. Tickets, priced at £10 each, are available from:

- Sue at issima (6 High Street, Tel:325979)
- Tracey at Craven-Holmes (32 High Street, Tel:329010)
- Karen at KM&G Farrer (35 Hugh Street, Tel:322740)

Quizmaster Geoff Hustwit will again be taking charge to test participants' grey matter, and a light supper will be served to tables in the interval. A cash prize will be presented to the winning team. It's always a very enjoyable evening, and despite standing down from the Chamber Committee this time Barbara Hill has kindly offered to organise the event.

For the last two Quiz Nights Commence Marketing very kindly sponsored both evenings. We are still in need of a Sponsor (or two!) so if anyone would like to step forward and sponsor this year's event please contact the Secretary (secretary@boroughbridgeCT.co.uk) for further details.

4. Hanging Baskets

North Yorkshire Council have recently announced the return of their "Business Is Blooming" Hanging Basket Partnership Scheme. It's a chance for local businesses to give their business the extra wow factor this summer with a subsidised hanging basket. The baskets generally have a good reputation for their beauty and vibrant colours, enhancing towns across the district. Several Boroughbridge town-centre business owners subscribed last year and the baskets do make a difference to the attractiveness of the town centre.

Key Details:

- Display Dates: From 25 May 2026 to late September/early October.
- Costs:
 - Hanging basket only: £99.26 (zero VAT)
 - Bracket, installation, and basket: £186.86 (inc. VAT on bracket)
- Order Deadline: ***Please confirm by 10th April 2026.***

Watering & Maintenance:

- Self-watering baskets watered 2-3 times a week by the Council.
- Includes horticultural feed for thriving plants.

Bracket Info:

- New participants must select the 'Bracket and Basket' package.
- Annual safety inspections included.

Location Restrictions:

- Only specific locations available due to access and parking. Individual town maps can be found on our website.

For more information or to place your order, visit:

<https://www.horticulturalnursery.com/business-is-blooming>

5. Late Payments to Small Businesses

Back in the July/August 2024 Chamber Chat we highlighted some of the business priorities for the then new Labour Government. One of those priorities related to Late Payments to small businesses. Almost two years have passed without noticeable action but at last it looks as though something will be happening.

Times are tough enough for small businesses with rising costs, a faltering economy, and the constant pressure to keep cashflow steady, which all mean that getting paid promptly has become ever more crucial.

According to research done by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) 68% of small businesses experience late payments in any given three-month period. The issue is estimated to cost the economy £11 billion annually and an average of 38 small businesses close every day due to its impact.

This week the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Peter Kyle, confirmed that the UK Government will be implementing a new package of measures to address the issue. Crucially, this will be written into law as the toughest late payments legislation in the G7.

The measures will toughen existing but unenforced rules for an absolute maximum of 60-day payments – stopping companies paying in 90 or 120 days, and the next step is to make 30 days the acceptable maximum in British business; compel audit committees and boards of big companies to probe their CEOs and CFOs on payment practices and challenge them to improve and publish performance in their annual reports; mandate automatic late payment interest; and create new powers to investigate and penalise poor payers.

The FSB has been hugely influential in these developments and continues to work with the Government to ensure practical implementation. All good so far, but when the law will actually change to support these aims is not clear at this stage. In the meantime, the Small Business Commissioner Emma Jones CBE (didn't know we had one!) has said "The measures the Government has announced will strengthen the role of my office in taking on the worst payers alongside ensuring small businesses have a stronger voice on payment terms and late payment interest."

More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/time-to-pay-up-government-unveils-toughest-crackdown-on-late-payments-in-over-25-years>

6. Snippets

It was only in the December edition of Chamber Chat that we reported the opening of **Dream Attic** on Fishergate. Sadly, the business is now closing down after just a few short months of trading.

The **Punch Bowl Inn** at Marton-cum-Grafton has recently been acquired by Simon Wade, owner of The Grantham Arms (a Chamber member), the Fox & Hounds, Langthorpe, Tap on the Tutt on Horsefair and the Blue Bell at Arkendale. The portfolio continues to grow and Simon is currently advertising for staff.

... and keep up to date with the Chamber

News Items are regularly posted to the Chamber website (www.boroughbridgect.co.uk) and we post on Facebook (@BoroughbridgeCT) too.

Make sure you follow and check out these channels for regular updates, useful alerts and information.

Footnote: Please note that the various blue email and website links in this document are not live links – i.e. you cannot click on them. To use them simply copy the text and paste it into your browser or email client.