

# Chamber split leaves a tangled web as alternative site is set up



Anne Nelson has been elected president of the chamber of commerce

## President is 'passionate' about town

A new president has been elected at Tenterden Chamber of Commerce.

Anne Nelson, of legal firm Nelson McLean, which specialises in residential and commercial conveyancing, wills and lasting powers of attorney, spent five-and-a-half years as the organisation's secretary.

Mrs Nelson, the wife of deputy town mayor Cllr Justin Nelson, who served as secretary until September 2014, has continued to play an active role in the chamber.

On her election to president she said: "It's a great honour to be made president of the Chamber and I am humbled to be selected."

Speaking of her hopes for the role she said: "Tenterden is such a beautiful place to live and I would like to see the town remain vibrant, with plenty of independent shops, employing local people."

"It would be a pleasant place that I appeal to both residents and visitors."

Anne, originally from Lancaster, says that she has an enduring passion for Tenterden. She said: "I love Tenterden and if I was a stick of rock and you cut me in half it would probably say 'Tenterden'."

Praising the chamber Anne said: "The chamber is thriving and we have highly successful monthly business meetings, which attract about 80 people. We are really punching above our weight for the size of the town."



The Tenterden Chamber of Commerce website; Sue Ferguson has set up her own website promoting the town

Picture: Gary Browne/FM408658

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A rift has opened up between chamber of commerce members in Tenterden resulting in rival websites representing the town.

Town councillor Sue Ferguson was at the centre of a dramatic split with the Tenterden Chamber of Commerce after a showdown at its annual meeting on April 5.

A row erupted over Cllr Ferguson's bid to gain a place on the executive committee of the organisation, along with David Swaine, of Swaines and photographer Lewis Brockway.

Speaking anonymously, a chamber member claimed that during a tense meeting, held in the barn of The Woolpack pub in Tenterden, Cllr Ferguson effectively put forward a vote of no confidence in the committee.

Cllr Ferguson said that she had

proposed a change in the structure of the committee, as she had felt excluded from decisions over the Tenterden Town website, which she has championed.

The meeting was abandoned and re-convened last Thursday at the Zion Baptist Church in Tenterden High Street.

The spat led to Cllr Ferguson's suspension as the town council's representative from committee meetings, which she said left her no choice but to resign her role and at that point she established a breakaway website to represent the town, www.mytenterden.co.uk

Cllr Ferguson was the driving force behind the chamber's website at [www.tenterdentown.co.uk](http://www.tenterdentown.co.uk) and the Twitter account @TenterdenTown, since rebranded

## 'My website is just an alternative means of promoting Tenterden and I intend to keep it as up to date as possible'

My Tenterden, which has 11,700 followers.

Cllr Ferguson said: "I have had a ghastly time [with the chamber] and all I have been trying to do is my best for Tenterden."

"I had worked for six years on the website I and couldn't walk away from all the businesses

and the community who rely on me to get information about the town out there."

She added: "My website is just an alternative means of promoting Tenterden and I intend to keep it as up to date as possible."

Lewis Brockway, who described Cllr Ferguson's past work for the chamber as "outstanding", was asked to step down as its president due to a conflict of interest with his photographs being used by the chamber and Cllr Ferguson.

Anne Nelson, of legal practice Nelson McLean, who was elected president in Mr Brockway's place at the June annual meeting, said she was "disappointed" by the break-up.

Mrs Nelson, the wife of deputy town mayor Cllr Justin Nel-

son said: "I'm hugely saddened and disappointed about what has happened and that we now have two websites representing Tenterden."

"It's very confusing for visitors for the town as we are giving out mixed messages and diluting our brand."

"I hope that for the good of Tenterden that this situation can be resolved."

Jonathan Medes, who is the chamber's events officer said that since the re-convened general meeting he'd had "positive talks" with Cllr Ferguson.

Mr Medes said: "At the moment we are going it alone [with the website] but we need to sit round the table as there is room for discussion. We are all here for the town."