

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 7 February 2023

At 14.00, Southernhay United Reformed Church, Exeter

Present: Keith Lewis Chairman, Gert Vonhoff, Jane Evans, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Pamela Wootton, Jennifer Woodman. Hazel Harvey attended as President.

Apologies: John Monks.

1. Resignation. KL informed the committee that Robin Watson had resigned, feeling that she could now contribute less to the committee. KL said that he would write to RW thanking her for her contribution. The committee concurred.

2. Minutes of previous meeting – 6 December 2022.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3 Matters Arising. Central Station Cupola. KL would write to Network Rail.

Item 4 GV reported that the application to the St David's ward councillors for a grant of £350 towards the cost of the Water Lane Prospectus had been successful.

New website. GV reported that he had imported more material to the new website, although further work was needed on the Members' section. The old website content would continue to be available for inclusion on the new site. GV had asked for volunteers to update the history section. KL asked that all review the new site and give critical feedback.

Item 9 Livery. GV had simplified the colours for the new livery. The revised livery was agreed. GV would circulate a letter template to committee members.

Item 11 Outreach. GV would continue to look further at the community alliance and community builders and report back.

Item 12 Membership badges and purchase of advertising stand. Illness had prevented GV from purchasing the advertising stand and meeting JE to discuss badges. Deferred for next meeting.

4. Chair's Report.

The committee discussed whether the Society should hold a meeting on 'Democracy in Exeter – Is it working?' as proposed in KL's report. It was noted that this could be a popular event. However, members were concerned about the implications of such a meeting which would be seen as sponsoring a particular point of view. It was agreed that a talk by Martin Redfern, editor of the Exeter Observer, at a regular Saturday meeting would be much less controversial. The committee would then also be better able to judge whether it would be right to hold a wider meeting and if so in what format. KL would contact Martin Redfern to discuss dates.

New Member Event. It was agreed that the cost of hiring the DEI including refreshments was too high. Alternative venues were considered but a cheaper alternative would be to hold a walk, perhaps linked to

blue plaques or a private Red Coat guided tour, with a meeting in a café. The café might also be a fallback in case of bad weather. KL would consider possibilities and discuss with Mike Richards.

There would be a Civic Day in June but KL noted that the Exeter Canal and Quay Trust (ECQT) would be holding events over the last weekend in May which included stalls on the Piazza Terracina. He thought this would be a better proposition for the Society and would investigate further the possibility of taking a stall.

GV noted that if the Society wished to attract new members from a different demographic a different approach would be needed e.g., a family day. Further thought should be given to this.

The speaker programme for February to April was re-confirmed with the following committee members responsible for liaison with the speaker:

- 18 February Exeter Planning, speakers KL, GV, AM
- 18 March Cornerstone Housing Association, speaker Tom Woodman (JW)
- 15 April Exeter City Canal, speaker Grahame Forshaw, Harbour Master (JM) (NB KL would not be available in April. GV agreed to stand in for him at the meeting.)
- 20 May No speaker arranged.
- 17 June No speaker arranged.
- 15 July No speaker arranged.

KL would discuss the suitability of the May or June meeting with Martin Redfern.

Other future possible speakers and talks were:

- Gorst Energy on Exeter's Anaerobic Digestion energy generation plant, linked to a visit (GV).
- Topsham Museum who had offered a talk in return for the Society talking to their members about blue plaques. (Hilary Neville)
- Diana Moore (St David's councillor) who had asked potentially to talk after May about her proposal for public transport improvements including an electric bus along the High Street (GV).
- Dave Hodgson, ECC's Finance Director, on local government finance and Exeter. KL to approach.
- Peter Stevenson of St. Petrock's for the end of 2023 (JM).

KL asked that committee members continue to identify possible speakers for future dates.

KL said that he would shortly meet Lynn Hornblower who had offered to organise walks and similar events (not Saturday talks).

Heritage Assets. KL had written to David Bartram of ECC about Heritage Assets (copy of letter circulated) who would advise KL of the person now responsible for the issues raised.

Working arrangements with Topsham Association. KL had yet to meet the association.

5. Treasurer's Report.

JE had circulated copies of the current profit and loss account and the balance sheet. These were noted. She had received several comments on a draft email to life members seeking annual donations and would prepare a final version for issue later in the year.

6. Planning Report.

PW had circulated a report of the Planning Committee's activities and the letters to ECC which had resulted. These were noted.

The meeting discussed the Glasshouse Lane development, the proposed student accommodation development on the university campus, and the proposed installation of BT Hubs in the city centre and concluded that no further action would be taken. The Planning Committee had objected to the internal development at 2 Raleigh Road on grounds of inadequate space but it had been permitted under delegated arrangements and would be signed off by the ECC Planning Committee in February.

The meeting also discussed the objection to the retrospective application for rear windows at the Sorry Head student accommodation, the loss of premises for PlumbIn at Tudor Street, and the protection of such local businesses.

7. Strategic Planning and Highways Group report.

GW circulated a report on recent activity. Responses had been submitted on the Exeter Plan, the East Devon Plan, Exeter Community Infrastructure Levy review, and the Canalside Development. KL had written to Ian Collinson of ECC asking for a meeting to discuss CIL spending in relation to Wider Water Lane infrastructure, and would write again asking for a meeting to discuss CIL allocations. KL had also written to South West Historic England asking for a meeting to discuss why they had supported the Canalside development.

KL and GV with Water Lane neighbourhood groups had met the Water Lane developers on 20 December. There would be a follow-up meeting with them on 9 February.

The Green News, Winter Edition for the St David's ward had featured the Civic Society's project. It had been delivered to all houses in the ward.

There were further consultations on Teignbridge's plan (deadline 13 March) and on Exeter's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure (deadline 31 March) to which the Society would respond. The next meeting of the group would be on 20 February.

8. Blue Plaques.

A report had been circulated.

The Committee approved spending on the Mary Willcocks' plaque costing £645. There would be a contribution to the cost of £150 from the South Wales and West of England Women's Network and possibly of £100 from the ward councillors' fund. The Devon History Society would arrange and meet the cost of the associated celebration at a place to be decided. The plaque would be placed on 88 Pennsylvania Road. The unveiling and celebration were likely to take place in early June.

The Dick Pym plaque organised and funded through the Topsham Museum was likely to be unveiled in the late spring but a date had yet to be settled.

The Committee approved the George Gissing plaque for towards the end of the year or in 2024. Support from the Gissing Society would be sought.

9. Exeter Quay and Canal Group

Deferred to the next meeting in JM's absence.

10. Discovering Exeter Booklets

The meeting discussed production of updated Discovering Exeter Booklets. Ian Maxted had produced a near final version of the St Leonard's booklet - 64 pages in A5 portrait. Some design issues remained to be resolved. He had been quoted c£300 for 100 booklets, c£500 for 200. Julia Neville was part way through

revising the Sidwell Street booklet but wanted further clarification on design, content and willingness to proceed to publication. She had also suggested a project manager from within the Society would help smooth production. Eduardo Hoyos had expressed interest in updating his 20th century Exeter architecture booklet.

The Committee were willing to fund production of booklets but considered further investigation was needed on the marketing possibilities. The Society had in the past printed and sold over 2000 copies of a booklet but, although costs per copy would reduce over longer runs, this number might be too many and a smaller run more appropriate. It was thought that Ian had the ability to prepare a booklet for publication but this was unlikely to be so for other authors. Design help would most likely be needed to ensure consistency and a good appearance across booklets which would add to costs. An A4 copy posted on the website would be cheaper but less attractive. It would be possible to post a version of the printed booklet on the website.

KL said that he would research some marketing possibilities in Exeter and it would be helpful if Ian could also do this. Members asked to see a copy of the latest version. The ECQT event at the end of May would be a good event for which to have booklets available.

The Society had several copies of the Secret Gardens booklet. It was agreed these could be sold on the basis that the Society held the copyright.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

12. Dates of meetings

28 March 2023 at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.

16 May 2023 at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.

18 July 2023 at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.