

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 11 March 2024

Present: Keith Lewis (Chairman), Gert Vonhoff, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Rita Watson, Jennifer Woodman.

Apologies: Hazel Harvey, Pamela Wootton, John Monks, Jane Evans

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 29 January 2024.

The minutes were approved, subject to the correction of two typographical errors.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3. Cathedral Dean letter. A reply had not yet been received. It seemed unlikely one would be.

Item 3. Heritage Harbour Group. Kept on hold.

Item 3 Heritage Assets letter. Exeter City Council (ECC) had not yet replied but KL was continuing to chase for one.

Item 3 AGM Follow-up. Adding RW to the list of trustees held by the Charity Commission was still outstanding. It had become clear that only JE was permitted to amend the trustee list under the Commission's on-line system.

Item 6 KL reported that ECC had confirmed that the ledge on the quay wall would be untouched by the remedial works.

Item 8. Margaret Jackson Blue Plaque. AM reported that the plaque would be sponsored although it was possible that the Society would need to meet any fixing and celebration costs. The sponsors had asked that any funds not used for the plaque should be returned to them. Hilary Neville would be seeking grants from relevant medical societies to ensure all costs were covered. The plaque was likely to be unveiled in July [now August or late September to enable the family to attend]. The Committee agreed that any unused funds from the sponsors would be returned to them.

JW noted that the first of Historic England's 'local' blue plaque had now been unveiled in Ilkley. Their communications continued to stress that their activities would complement, not replace, existing schemes.

Item 9. KL asked when the Discovering Exeter booklets would be moved to the members' area. GV noted that there were some technical issues to resolve but it would be done when time permitted.

4. Trustee Responsibilities

The Committee reviewed the Charity Commission's summary guide to trustee responsibilities to ensure that it was fresh in trustees minds and to provide reassurance that the requirements set out in the guide were adhered to.

It was agreed that when seeking future committee nominations, members would be provided with clarity that all committee members were trustees of the Society, details of the Society's objects and its committee's powers from the constitution, and a copy of the Charity Commission's summary guide. It would also be made clear that current committee members were confident about meeting the trustee duties and that they were not onerous.

The committee concurred that the society appeared to be operating in accordance with the charity commission guidance.

5. Chair's Report.

KL had circulated a written report.

The Saturday morning meeting on 20 January with Cllrs Phil Bialyk and Emma Morse had been very well-attended and was generally positively viewed. The speaker programme to May is:

- 16 March Cllr Anne Jobson (KL)
- 20 April Martin Watts on Exeter's mills (KL)
- 18 May Peter Knight, Stagecoach South West Region Managing Director (AM).

Other possible speakers and talks for 2024 were:

- John Davidson on flood issues (KL approached, reply awaited)
- Richard Holladay on the past city centre retail trade (KL to approach)
- 'Mark' from the Exeter Food Bank (KL to approach)
- Exeter Cycle Campaign.
- Stuart Blaylock on Heritage Assets, notably the City Walls (suggested by PW)

Details of talks should be sent to GV to put on the website. KL would not be available for the 15 June talk but AM expected to be able to lead.

The next walk would be on 3 April around North Exeter.

12 people, including one non-member, had attended the Planning Teach-in on 4 March. A further event to provide more information was planned for May.

ECC had replied to KL's email about their plan for clearing weeds from the streets saying that removing pavement weeds was DCC's responsibility but ECC had a programme to clear road gutters. KL would seek a timetable from ECC and write to DCC about pavement weeds. GV noted that DCC's approach to resurfacing some pavements did not resolve problems of unevenness and was unsightly.

KL welcomed ECC's announcements that playing pitches would be laid at the Bromham Farm Field site funded by the Environment Agency which would make the area more attractive and useful.

KL noted that much time recently had been spent on responding to Historic England's consultation on the possible listing of Larkbeare House. The Committee agreed that the points made in the draft response previously circulated and the press release tabled at the meeting should be sent.

6. Treasurer's Report.

There was no Treasurer's report in the absence of JE. KL noted that the Society had slightly less than £3000. As the costs of the Margaret Jackson blue plaque would be substantially or totally met by sponsorship, the main costs for the rest of the financial year would be room hire and possibly publishing a revised version of the St Leonard's Discovering Exeter booklet.

GV proposed that David Salmon should be given honorary membership for the rest of the year following his significant contribution to the work of the Tree Preservation Taskforce and other activity. The Committee agreed. (AM/JE)

7. Planning Report

KL had circulated the minutes of the 1 and 20 February planning sub-committee meetings. There had been no major items other than for the proposed significant development at Stoke Hill which the Society would be opposing as it would infringe on the 'green hills' to the north of the city and was poorly sited for transport.

KL reported that ECC hoped that progress would soon be made on the Royal Clarence site.

8. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. Particular points to note for the future were:

- A supplementary response to the Exeter Plan for the Water Lane area would be submitted following the Inspector's rejection of the appeal in respect of the development of the old police station site on Heavitree Road mainly on grounds of height and massing.
- There would be a meeting of the SP&H group later in March to discuss the response to DCC's consultation on the Heavitree Road and Pinhoe Road bus corridors. It would also further refine the proposed paper on the Heavitree and Whipton Active Street trail which would be presented to an 'invitation only' roundtable to discussion to include people for and against the trial. The aim of the roundtable would be to get an agreed set of adjustments to the scheme.
- The Tree Preservation Taskforce might undertake a further visit to Larkbeare to obtain a fuller understanding of the tree species on the site.

9. Discovering Exeter booklets.

Sidwell Street the Committee agreed the written proposal from Dr Julia Neville that the revision of the Sidwell Street booklet should exclude the streets south of Blackboy Road. This would enable new features such as St Sidwell's Point to be included. The excluded streets could either be included in any revision of the Heavitree booklet which already included adjoining ones or in a separate one devoted to Newtown and Clifton Hill.

St Leonard's AM reported that he had had a further meeting with Aylwyn Bowen (AB) to discuss possible designs for the St Leonard's revision. AM would now discuss possibilities and costs with two designers/printers, including Stormpress recommended by AB. AB was not charging for his advice and ideas. In the meantime, Ian Maxted had revised the draft

booklet into landscape and it was now close to the 48 pages of the current version. AM was confident it could be shortened to the 48 page limit. No further work was being done on the draft pending the outcome of the discussions with printers.

9. Any Other Business.

There was no other business

10. Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 15 May and Wednesday 23 July, both at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.