

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 23 July 2024

Present: Keith Lewis (Chair), Gert Vonhoff, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Jennifer Woodman, Hazel Harvey, Jane Evans (Treasurer), John Monks

Apologies: Pamela Wootton, Rita Watson

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 15 May 2024.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 4. Discovering Exeter Booklets. AM reported that Ian Maxted had provided a further draft and three members had volunteered to test the two walks. He expected that the testing would be completed in August and a further near final draft prepared. He hoped that the revised booklet would be published for the AGM in November. It was agreed to keep the yellow colour from the mock-up.

Item 6 KL had written to Stuart Blaylock of the Devon Archaeological Society about jointly lobbying ECC on the state of the City Walls and the need for a maintenance budget but had yet to receive a reply.

4. Chair's Update

KL had circulated a written report. The committee discussed KL's proposal that the Society develop a vision for the city. It was agreed that, as ECC were developing their Local Plan on the back of consultation about a vision for the city, the Society should wait until the Local Plan was published in the autumn and then produce what would in effect be a critique of the plan. The document could consider different approaches to building housing, for example terraced houses rather than blocks of flats. The January Saturday meeting could be a members' workshop to develop the document.

The speaker programme was confirmed as:

- 21 September Dianne Long from Devon Gardens Trust (AM)
- 19 October Stuart Blaylock Rougemont Castle (KL)
- 16 November AGM
- 14 December [Now Alan Caig on the History of Theatre in Exeter]
- 18 January 2025 Potential workshop post draft Local Plan publication
- 15 February TBC
- 15 March Possible social event.

KL noted that the city now had two new MPs for the two constituencies of Exeter and Exmouth and East Exeter. It was agreed that KL would write to the MPs introducing the Society. AM reported that HN had already written to Steve Race, the Exeter MP, asking if he would attend the unveiling of the Margaret Jackson plaque.

KL noted that part of King George V Playing Fields was to be leased to Exeter City FC for a community football and sports hub but there would still be a majority of open space left for community use. He considered that the society should not oppose the sale.

KL had drafted a letter to Exeter Energy opposing the siting of an energy plant at Grace Road Playing Fields which was within the Riverside Valley Park. It was agreed that a plant on that site should be opposed, although it was recognised that the proposed plant itself was a positive development. KL asked that committee members provide comments on the letter. The council had decided to sell the land and KL had also written to them about this as it breached previous commitments.

It was agreed that KL should write to ECC proposing there should be a design code for the Eastgate area of development which stretched from Sidwell Street to St Luke's campus.

5. AGM Planning

The draft agenda and invite circulated earlier were agreed subject to minor amendments.

It was agreed that the 2023/24 accounts should be reviewed by the Independent Examiner for consideration by the Committee by 25 October so that they could be circulated with the AGM papers by 1 November.

6. Treasurer's Report.

JE reported that the Society had £3200 in the bank.

7. Planning Report

KL had circulated the minutes of the 28 May, 18 June and 9 July planning group meetings. The group had objected to the ugly siting of electric vehicle chargers in the middle of the St Thomas' car park and several other proposals.

9. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. The group had also met on 22 July.

Key points were:

- A new leader was needed for the Tree Preservation Task Force, although Stephen Mariner would continue in the interim. ECC had appointed an interim tree officer, Ben Cork.
- Peter Cleasby would prepare a position statement and criteria on active travel based on material which had already been produced and which the society could draw on for future proposals.
- The Water Lane SPD needed to be reviewed to identify where Society comments had been taken on board. Once the current planning application had been determined the Society would meet the organisations which had joined in producing the prospectus to see what more could be done. The Water Sports Association would be a suitable venue on a Monday or Wednesday evening.
- GV had attended a meeting to discuss the Cathedral and City Skyline as part of ECC's development of the Local Plan. He hoped there would be a further meeting or at least consultation on any outcome from the discussion.

- The timetable had now been set for the independent examination of Teignbridge Council's Local Plan. AM was considering whether the Society should participate in the hearings (deadline 13 August) and/or submit further written evidence (deadline 23 August).

10. Blue Plaques Report.

Hilary Neville had circulated a report on progress with the plaque for Dr Margaret Jackson. The committee agreed in principle to allocate £200 for refreshments and any additional costs not met by sponsors. It was agreed there would be a donations box at the event. GV asked that HN provide text and a photo for the website. A press release would be needed.

11. Any Other Business.

Jim Perriam did not wish to lead further walks. Only two people had attended the last walk. GV would lead a further walk about the City Walls on 7 August but a new walk leader and a different approach was needed. GV suggested walks should be shorter and more geared to socialising afterwards.

15. Dates of Next Meetings

Tuesday 8 October and Wednesday 11 December, both at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.