

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 24 October 2023

Present: Keith Lewis (Chairman), Gert Vonhoff, Jane Evans (Treasurer) Andy McKeon (Secretary), Pamela Wootton, Jennifer Woodman, Hazel Harvey. Rita Watson (in attendance as observer)

1. Apologies: John Monks.

2. Minutes of previous meeting – 29 August 2023.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3 Matters Arising. Central Station Cupola. KL had now identified a suitable contact who had informed him that the replacement of the cupola might feature in the next five year plan currently being considered and starting in April 2024.

Item 3 Discovering Exeter Booklets. AM reported that a draft design and author's guide had been prepared and was awaiting comments from Ian Maxted.

Item 3 Pyramids Leisure Centre Foundation Stone. It was agreed this issue would be left until the planning application was submitted.

Item 3. Heritage Harbour Festival. KL thanked GV and the other volunteers for their work at the festival. GV noted that the cannon firing had left one volunteer with tinnitus. He had reported this to the festival organiser and suggested that future festivals would need to bear this in mind when proposing that the cannon should be fired.

Item 6 Future Saturday morning speakers. It was agreed to delete Martin Redfern, Topsham Museum, Dave Hodgson and Tony Buller from the potential speaker list but to add John Davidson to it for a talk on flood issues.

Item 6. 10 members had gone on the Tuckers Hall visit.

Item 6. Facebook Page. GV had launched the Society's new Facebook page – 'Exeter Civic Society New 2023' – which now had 60 followers.

Item 6. The proposed letter to the Cathedral Dean had not been sent yet. KL would revise it to reflect the passage of time and circulate it for comment to a few committee members. It was noted that the letter should refer to the Cathedral Green rather than the Cathedral Close.

Item 10. Nobody had stepped forward to chair the River, Canal and Quay Group. It was agreed that the group would be discontinued and any subsequent issues picked up by the Planning Sub-committee or the Strategic Planning and Highways Group. Peter Nickols would be thanked at the AGM for his work as chair of the group. Historical material on the group's activities would be left on the website in case of interest. It was agreed that John

Monk's proposal of facilitating Society membership of the community group steering the Heritage Harbour would be taken up and a representative from the committee put forward.

4. Revising the Constitution.

The meeting considered the papers circulated by AM. The following substantive amendments were agreed alongside some typographical ones:

- Revised para 5 to be amended to read ' There shall also be up to six other members of the Committee, making a maximum of 12 in all'.
- Revised Paragraph 6 would make clear that Committee members were also the trustees of the Society.
- Revised para 11 to be amended so that the main Committee set the terms of reference for any sub-committee and appointed a core of three members, including the chair. Other members could join the committee as and when without main committee approval.
- Revised Paragraph 14. Members to be given at least six weeks' notice of the date of the AGM.

The Committee agreed that the revised constitution, as amended, would be put to members at the November AGM.

5. AGM.

The draft agenda would be amended so that there would be an 'open meeting' after the AGM which would be used to discuss future activities and which would be the place for KL and GV to comment on the work of the Planning Sub-committee and the Strategic Planning and Highways Group and where efforts should be focused in the next year.

KL would provide a written annual report to be circulated with the AGM papers.

Refreshments would be provided by Corinne Richards from the Saturday meeting coffee money. She would be reimbursed by members paying for them.

6. Chair's Report.

KL had circulated a written report. The speaker programme to March is:

- 18 November AGM
- 16 December Peter Stephenson of St Petroc's (JM)
- 20 January Cllr Phil Bialyk who would be encouraged to speak on the revised draft Exeter Plan recently issued for consultation (KL)
- 17 February Ian Varndell on the Dissenters' Graveyard (KL)
- 16 March Cllr Anne Robson (KL)
- 20 April Martin Watts on Exeter's mills (proposed by PW)

Other possible speakers and talks for 2024 were:

- John Davidson on flood issues
- Bindu Arjoon, ECC's new Chief Executive.
- Exeter Cycle Campaign.

Heritage Assets. It was agreed that KL would write to ECC welcoming the proposed repair to the city walls by the City Gate hotel and asking that the 2024/25 budget should provide for further repairs, perhaps as part of a rolling programme.

Community Alliance. It was agreed that the possibility of joining the Community Alliance should be put on hold.

Exeter Local History Society Book Launch 26 October. Stephen Marriner had agreed to go in place of KL. It was agreed that there would be a lottery at the AGM for Todd Gray's book about lost eighteenth century buildings with tickets at £2 each (KL) .

7. Treasurer's Report.

JE reported that she expected the 2022/23 accounts to be subject to independent examination by Catherine Johns and an approved version to be available for the AGM. The accounts would show that membership had held up and that the Society had a favourable balance of over £3000. This was lower than two years ago but reflected a conscious decision to spend some of the surplus on activities which had successfully promoted the Society and membership.

A number of members' standing orders had not been updated for the new subscription rates. It was agreed that their membership would be confirmed but they would be asked for the missing amounts. They would also be sent a standing order form so they could revise their subscription for 2024/25. A further reminder about subscriptions would be included in the letter to members about the AGM and in the November bulletin.

8. Planning Report

KL had circulated a report of recent activity.

AM mentioned that three planning applications in the previous week's list might be worthy of consideration: the proposed sign at 163-165 Fore Street; and the developments at Newcourt and Mincinglake even though both had outline planning permission.

AM also noted that it might be worth putting down markers about the potential developments at County Hall's Matford Lane offices and Larkbeare House following Devon County Council's intention to sell them. KL had already suggested the need to determine whether the mature trees on or near these sites were subject to Tree Preservation Orders. He had also received an email suggesting that consideration be given to listing Larkbeare House and that the Devon Gardens Trust should be contacted. AM said he would pursue the issues raised.

9. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. The Society's response to the Wider Water Lane planning application was being drafted. He would be arranging a meeting in November when the main topics for discussion would be:

- The Society's response to the recently issued revised draft Exeter plan;
- The Draft Design Code for the Water Lane area
- The draft Householders Guide for extensions and alterations: and

- The 'Heavitree and Whipton Active Streets' Trial which was likely to be changed and so the 6 month trial period would start again. GV had discussed possible use of the ST Mark's church hall or the church itself for the proposed meeting to find common ground but emotions still needed to cool further before it would be sensible to hold this. Recent data suggested that there had been little increase in traffic on the boundary roads and that the number of pedestrian and cycle journeys in the trial area had increased.

10. George Gissing Blue Plaque.

AM reported that the plaque was scheduled to be unveiled on 8 December at 11am. It would be followed by coffee at the Barnfield Theatre. Prof Richard Dennis who was unveiling the plaque would then lead a small group in a walk round sites associated with Gissing. Prof Dennis would also give a lecture on Gissing at the Devon and Exeter Institution on the evening of 7 December.

The plaque would cost £550 and was scheduled for delivery in mid-November. There would also be fixing costs. One quote for £76 plus VAT had been received and another would be sought. It was unclear whether there would be a contribution from the Gissing Society. It was agreed that whether the Society paid for coffee at the Barnfield Theatre would be considered in light of any Gissing Society contribution.

11. Any Other Business.

KL asked that there be an update on the 'Devon Witches' plaque at the next meeting.

PW reported that there were many adverts for student accommodation for the 2024 academic year which suggested there was still great pressure on such lets despite the increase in purpose built student accommodation.

12. Dates of Next Meetings

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