

EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 8 October 2024

Present: Keith Lewis (Chair), Gert Vonhoff, Andy McKeon (Secretary), Jennifer Woodman, Jane Evans (Treasurer), Rita Watson

Apologies: Pamela Wootton, John Monks, Hazel Harvey

1. Minutes of previous meeting – 23 July 2024.

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising.

Item 3. Discovering Exeter Booklets. AM reported that the near final set of proofs would be available later in the week. The costs would be a little higher but he estimated they would be just over £400 for 300 copies subject to any further changes. It was agreed that free copies would be provided to Ian Maxted, Aylwyn Bowen, St Leonard's Neighbourhood Association, the two test walkers of the booklet and the Devon Archive. There would be no ISBN number unless the Society already had unused numbers (AM to check – the society has 8 unused numbers). AM expected that the booklet would be available for the AGM. Ian Maxted would be given a gift of £50 for his work, plus any expenses.

Item 4 Walks. Two members had volunteered to lead walks in October and November. More were needed. The matter would be raised in the bulletin and at the AGM. AM would ask if the people who had tested the St Leonard's booklet would like to lead one or both walks in it.

Item 10 Blue Plaques. It was agreed that the unveiling of the blue plaque to Dr Margaret Jackson and the accompanying talks had been very successful. The committee's thanks to Hilary Neville who had led for the Society in organising the plaque and its unveiling would be passed on.

4. Chair's Update

KL had circulated a written report. Points considered further were:

Exeter Energy. It was agreed to try to hold a public meeting in the evening of 18 or preferably 20 November at the Water Sports Association. The Water Lane development could also be discussed depending on the progress of the planning application. KL would liaise with JE about booking the event. Committee members would need to help on the day.

Street Cleaning. KL had raised the issue of ineffective street cleaning with Exeter City Council. He proposed to issue a press release on the subject which would identify the problem areas. Members would be asked in the October bulletin to submit details of any issues with photographs if possible. (AM)

Community Alliance. Committee members continued to be uncertain about associating the Society with some members of the alliance. KL would gather further information for a discussion at the next meeting. (KL)

At the commencement of the Saturday events at The Mint we must, under the conditions of the licence to use the Wesley Room, announce the required health and safety and fire drill requirements. KL to draft some wording and circulate.

The speaker programme is:

- 19 October Stuart Blaylock Rougemont Castle (KL)
- 16 November AGM
- 14 December Steve Race MP (KL) followed by Alan Caig on the History of Theatre in Exeter (AM)
- 18 January 2025 speaker needed
- 15 February Planning Issues discussion
- 15 March Possible social event (All to consider venue and style)

It was agreed that the December meeting would include time for discussion with Steve Race MP. KL would liaise with his office. It was noted that David Reed, MP for East Exeter and Exmouth had not yet responded to KL's letter. KL asked that committee members help to find speakers for 2025.

5. AGM Planning

It was agreed that committee members would approve the accounts by email. KL would provide a written report by the end of October for circulation with the papers on 1 November. KL would ask Corrine to organise lunch to be charged at £5 per person. The AGM would include a discussion of the Society's forthcoming activities after the formal part of the meeting. KL would ascertain whether Hazel Harvey would attend but as she has stood down KL will open the meeting until a new president is elected. We hope to give Hazel some words of thanks from members who have worked with her in the past.

RW said she would stand down from the committee. We really need to encourage new committee members to join us to keep the breadth of discussion and support.

6. Treasurer's Report.

JE reported that the accounts would be available next week having been subject to independent examination. Catherine Johns, the independent examiner was willing to continue for the next year. JE would go through the membership to check on renewals. A reminder would be included in the October bulletin to those members whose subscriptions were outstanding and who had not indicated they did not wish to renew their membership. The email to life members asking that they consider making a donation had elicited some generous contributions.

7. Planning Report

KL had circulated the minutes of the 30 July, 20 August and 18 September planning group meetings.

It was noted that work had already started on creating the all-weather pitch at Exwick playing fields but the Society would object to the proposed classroom in place of changing rooms in the revised planning application as education was not one of the designated purposes of the Riverside Valley Park and would bring no direct public benefit.

The revised proposals for the police and magistrates' court site on Heavitree Road would be considered at the next SP&H meeting and the demolition of the Station Masters' house on New North Road and replacement by a six storey block of flats at the next planning group meeting. The revised proposals for the Heavitree Road site were an improvement. The Station Master's house is not listed and is next to two six storey blocks so objections based on keeping the house and/or regarding the height of the proposed building are not relevant.

KL reported that some non-material adjustments to the planning conditions for the Moor Exchange site had been made, probably to reflect the needs of future occupiers, but none should have a major impact on the overall outline approval. A FULL planning was submitted last year but has been in limbo, presumably until these issues are resolved when new plans may be submitted.

It was noted that planning permission for the co-living block on Victoria Street had been refused, partly on the grounds that it was overbearing.

8. Strategic Planning and Highways

GV had circulated a report on the group's activities. Points discussed following the report were:

The visit by Historic England's Historic Places panel had been an opportunity to press for greater involvement and inclusivity of community groups in the Exeter Partnership Panel (replacement for the Exeter Living Board) which the EPP said they were committed to. The Historic England panel supported greater inclusivity of community groups and its chair had undertaken to let the Civic Society have a copy of its report, possibly in draft.

GV hoped that the discussions between David Solman and David Gendle about chairing the Tree Preservation Task Force would be brought to a successful conclusion by the time of the AGM.

AM reported that Exeter City Council continued to object to the proposed housing allocations at Markham and Attwell's Farm in the Teignbridge plan on the grounds of unacceptable increases in traffic and adverse impacts on important Exeter sightlines. ECC would be represented at the hearing on 5 November. They had raised no objection to the housing and employment land allocation at Peamore.

9. Any Other Business.

The proposed discussion on the National Planning Policy Framework consultation and membership of Civic Voice was deferred to the next meeting in JM's absence.

David Harvey had recently died. The funeral would be at 2pm on 28 October. AM would arrange for a card to be sent to Hazel Harvey.

JE and GV had attended the Exeter Observer AGM and had recommended that the Observer carry more short bulletins to attract a wider audience.

15. Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 11 December at 2pm Southernhay United Reformed Church. AM to organise.