



MINUTES OF BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY AGM

4 JUNE 2019

1 Opening and Chair's Welcome

Opening the meeting the Chair welcomed those present, and thanked them for their attendance and support. He felt that the Society was in a healthy state, exerting a considerable influence, offering a lot of activity for members to take part in if they wished, and with an outward-looking approach- it had run visits to Salisbury, Oxford and (to come) Bridgwater, and has played host to groups from Salisbury and Chester (forthcoming), and hosted a Civic Voice AGM a few years ago.

He and the Management Team recognised that the Society could not function without many volunteers. New volunteers were always needed, and he noted that there were sometimes unexpected rewards: recently, opportunities had arisen to visit the Bottle Yard film and TV production facility, and the work-in-progress at the Colston Hall; because of the small numbers allowed, these were not advertised to the membership at large but only to the "activists".

2 Thanks and Tributes

The Chair thanked all members for joining and remaining in the Society, and in particular, those who played an active part as volunteers in the Society's many sub-groups. He thanked in particular Alex Dunn, who had done an excellent job as Membership Secretary, but was now standing down.

Of the many others who deserved thanks, several would be mentioned in the Review of Activity.

3 Minutes of the 2018 AGM

The minutes of the 2018 AGM were agreed without amendment.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Review of Civic Society Activity 2018

The Chair gave a brief overview of the principal areas of the Society's activity:

- The Major Sites Group under John Frenkel had responded to 63 major developments.
- The Planning Applications Group under John Payne had considered over 250 applications and submitted comments to the Council on about two thirds.
- Blue Plaques Panel: while only four new plaques were unveiled in 2018, work continued on four other proposals, and seven new applications came in during the year. Thanks were due to Gordon Young and the rest of the Panel for the time and effort they devoted to this. It was noted that, unlike some schemes, the BCS plaques can commemorate places as well as people.
- Design Awards: the 2018 awards went to The General, Castle Bridge, the YMCA, the Print Hall, and Aerospace. The Chair thanked Savills for their sponsorship.
- Student Award scheme, organised by John Jones and Wendy Pollard. In 2018 the award had gone to Lewis Hill from UWE, for a design for a Town Hall for Frome.
- Projects: Ashton Court- the consultants' report had finally been completed (and could be seen on the BCS website) and although the next steps lay with the Council, the Society would continue to be deeply involved in the work. St Michael's Church now had a new owner and work was in hand. In neither case was progress down to the Society alone, but it had played a vital role in acting as a spur to action by others.
- Communicating: during the year, the website had been given an excellent revamp and upgrade, for which the credit and thanks went to David and Laura Demery. The bi-annual magazine, Better Bristol, continued to attract praise for its quality and was a good advertising/recruiting tool. Thanks were due to Mike Manson (editor) and Tracey Feltham (designer). The Society also continued to produce regular E-bulletins and quarterly Public Space Bulletins, the work of Alan Morris
- Events: 2018 had seen a solid and well-attended programme of events (and 2019 promised to be a bumper year, with 19 visits/meetings)
- Membership now stood at 505 (up from 493 at the last AGM); a satisfactory level though the geographical spread did favour post code areas BS9, 8, 6 and 1.

6 Financial Report

The Treasurer reported that the Society's accounts for 2018, which had been circulated to members with the Spring edition of Better Bristol, were in good order, with a small surplus being recorded. A healthy reserve balance was maintained against the possibility of major expenditure being needed on eg a campaign, but this had not arisen in recent years. Income from members was rising slowly in line with membership numbers.

The Treasurer's report was agreed and noted by the AGM.

7 Appointment of Patron for 2019/20

The AGM noted that the Lord Mayor, Cllr Jos Clark, had kindly agreed to be the Society's patron for 2019/20

8 Election of Officers for 2019/20

The following were nominated:

Chair – Simon Birch

Vice-chair – There were no nominations.

Treasurer – John Jones

Secretary – Mike Bates

Membership Secretary – David Giles

The election of the above officers was proposed by John Frenkel, seconded by Stephen McFarlane and agreed by the AGM.

9 Appointment of Honorary Auditor 2019/20

Brenda McClennan had agreed once again to be nominated for this post.

The appointment was agreed by the AGM

10 Election of Management Team Members for 2019 to 2022

The following had agreed to be nominated for election to the Management Team:

Alex Dunn

Stephen Wickham

The election of the above was proposed by Nic Billane, seconded by John Payne and agreed by the AGM

11 Any Other Business

John Frenkel offered thanks, to the general approval of the meeting, to Simon Birch and expressed his appreciation of the work he had done as Chair over recent years.

Talk by invited speaker, Ian Harvey

The meeting concluded with a talk, “Civic Voice - Building a national voice fit for the future”, given by Ian Harvey, Joint Founder and Executive Director of Civic Voice

In a stimulating talk, Ian outlined the history of the Civic Society movement from 1846 to the present day, discussed some of the challenges facing us, and what Civic Voice was doing to help the movement be even more effective in the future

Challenges were both internal- the age profile of members, a difficulty in finding volunteers, declining numbers in some societies- and external: eg an alarming rise in the number of Conservation Areas at risk, and a decline in the local authority staffing/funding devoted to the issue.

Civic Voice was addressing these issues in a number of ways- by for example, helping societies network, by keeping in close contact with ministers, MPs, and officials in central government, making links with such bodies as the government’s Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission and by campaigning and lobbying. He quoted as an example, the announcement in May of a £44 million government fund to breathe new life into High Streets in conservation areas, which he attributed in part at least to Civic Voice’s campaigning for Historic High Streets and its “Big Conservation Conversation Campaign” launched in 2016.