



Board of Trustees

14 September 2010
Barbican, London

MINUTES

Paula Ridley (Chair)
Freddie Gick
Helen Marcus
David Lovie
John Walker
David Tittle

Tony Burton (Director)
Ian Harvey (Co-ordinator)

1. Apologies

There were apologies from Martin.

Paula reported that Paul Myers had resigned from the Board due to pressure of his other commitments which had grown. It was agreed that Paula should write thanking Paul for his contribution in establishing Civic Voice and helping to inspire Civic Day (**Action PR 34/10**). There was a discussion about the best way to fill the vacancy and it was decided to address this at the next meeting.

2. Minutes of meeting of 17 July 2010

The July Minutes were amended to reflect the discussion on strengthening civic societies and signed for the record. All the actions had been completed or were on the agenda with the exception of the Corporate Forum because of the emphasis currently being placed on seeking sponsorship for Civic Day.

3. Director's report

Tony reported on a busy summer, particularly on the policy and lobbying side with the highlight being the support from Eric Pickles and Philip Hammond for our Street Pride campaign to remove street clutter. This had been widely welcomed by civic societies and established Civic Voice's profile and influence. The Board congratulated the staff on this success. The Board discussed and agreed Civic Voice's approach to the forthcoming planning reforms and stressed their importance to civic societies. It also highlighted the need for civic societies to be in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities to shape local planning. The Board also supported work to take advantage

of the future opportunities to shape the legislation on alcohol licensing, working with the Open All Hours? network of civic societies and residents' groups, and those which may arise from a Government commitment to tree planting in urban areas.

There was a discussion about the pros and cons of local groups taking on historic buildings or open space being disposed of by public bodies and the Board agreed that civic societies had an important role to play in running campaigns and helping find solutions without necessarily taking on long term responsibility for ownership or management. The importance of assets being valued on the basis of their community and not simply economic value was stressed.

Tony reported that the funding proposal for a history of the civic movement had not been supported by HLF but that he was being encouraged to re-submit and would be meeting HLF staff to discuss this.

4. Strengthening civic societies – delivery plan

The Board welcomed the approach taken in the delivery plan following its discussion in July and by email over the summer. This stressed the need for an approach which was positive about civic society achievement, based on peer to peer communications of examples and bottom-up in its approach. It was agreed there was no single best way of achieving a stronger civic movement, especially given the diversity of different groups, and so the range of techniques and approaches proposed was needed. The value of Civic Voice's national lobbying in demonstrating the value of the work of local groups was also raised.

The Board discussed the synergy between the strength of local groups, their effectiveness and the effectiveness of the civic movement as a whole – recognising that influence and lobbying strength comes from having groups having good support, effective leadership and communications, and a positive reputation.

5. 2010 AGM and national convention

Ian outlined the plans for the first AGM and convention which were agreed. The Board emphasised the importance of a good turn out from members and the value of the informal opportunities to inform Civic Voice's priorities. The timing of the AGM business was discussed and it was recognised that there were no arrangements that would be universally popular.

The Board agreed to Martin's recommendation to propose appointment of Hargreaves and Woods, a long established firm in Chester, as Civic Voice's independent examiners at the AGM based on a quotation of £1,150 plus VAT for an independent examination of the accounts for the year ending 30th June 2011 (**Action MM 35/10**). Interim accounts would be presented to the 2010 AGM based on the key charitable and other activities undertaken by Civic Voice (**Action MM/TB 36/10**).

6. Civic Day

Freddie gave a progress report on Civic Day, outlining the approach which would embrace all civic societies while offering particular support to those who had joined Civic Voice. A non-prescriptive approach would be taken, encouraging activity which promoted public awareness and engagement in the local area and with particular

support for initiatives for young people. There would be a variety of awards (largely determined on the basis of self-assessment) and support from Civic Voice with key resources.

It was agreed to earmark £10,000 to underwrite the provision of a small grant to be sought by member societies which participated, in the event that we were unsuccessful in securing sponsorship. It was recognised that this would provide an important incentive for many groups although finances are not necessarily the main barrier to participation. The Board was asked to provide Freddie with any contacts or sponsorship suggestions **(All 37/10)**.

A number of suggestions were made which could be followed up with Tony, including the potential of an event on Hampstead Heath.

7. Financial update

The Management Accounts were circulated and discussed and it was agreed to consider providing an expected out-turn as part of the regular management information **(Action TB/MM 38/10)**.

8. Civic Panel

Paula reported on the first meeting of the Civic Panel and the positive support it had provided to Civic Voice. It was recognised as an important collaboration of “place making” voluntary groups which could exchange information, stimulate initiatives and provide an informed challenge to the civic movement, while not having a public face.

The Board agreed the proposed Regulations for appointing the Civic Panel trustee and appointed Neil Sinden on Paula’s nomination. Paula would write to Neil **(PR 39/10)** and he would be invited to the AGM.

9. Marsh Volunteer Awards

The Board welcomed the approach proposed to the Marsh Awards based on the “outstanding contribution” made by a volunteer or civic society. The awards would be announced at the AGM with nominations opening at Easter 2011.

10. Membership update

The Board received the latest membership report showing 258 groups, with a total individual membership of 68,000. The rate of growth had slowed and three approaches to addressing this were agreed – a 6 month membership from 1 November; encouraging societies who had taken out Bluefin’s insurance but not yet joined to do so; and personal approaches from trustees.

The Board began a wider discussion about the future sustainability of Civic Voice and the challenge of meeting the movement’s twin demands for financial independence and the capacity to both campaign and support local groups. A number of different scenarios were discussed, including the scope for individual members, reducing the fee to civic societies, raising the fee to civic societies, widening membership, providing new benefits, engaging with regional and other groupings and looking for other sources of funding and support. It was agreed to feed these into the October awayday and all

Board members were invited to contact Tony in advance with thoughts and suggestions for the issues to be discussed **(All 40/10)**.

11. Success measures

The latest success measures were tabled along with a red, amber, green traffic light system. There are no red measures. The value of the time spent supporting member societies was discussed and it was agreed this was a vital service that could be better promoted, perhaps through a dedicated hotline. Helen volunteered to help take calls from civic societies.

12. Board awayday

This would be held in the offices of Leeds Civic Trust on 30 October and include input from its Director, Kevin Grady. It was agreed the overall theme should be to look at how Civic Voice can be made sustainable looking ahead, by considering a number of different scenarios. The meeting would also need to inform a decision on membership fees to be made in January for renewals in April 2011.

13. AOB

The value of involving volunteers already working beyond their individual civic societies in regions and elsewhere was raised and agreed to be important. It was also agreed that an informal discussion around working arrangements with the London Forum would be useful **(HM 41/10)** The next meeting is on 30 October (11-4 awayday) at Leeds Civic Trust. Trustees would be contacted to agree dates for 2011 **(TB 42/10)**.

The meeting was followed by supper, kindly hosted by Paula.