



Board of Trustees

28 April 2010
1-3.30pm, PWC offices, Cornwall Court, Birmingham

MINUTES

Paula Ridley (Chair)
Martin Meredith (Treasurer)
Freddie Gick
Helen Marcus
Paul Myers
David Tittle
John Walker

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

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were received from David Lovie.

The Board was welcomed by Paula and congratulated on its appointment through the ballot of civic societies. Paula emphasised the significance of this first meeting of the new Board and the important role trustees need to play in running a national organisation and representing the whole membership, not parts of the country or specific interests.

The trustees introduced themselves and offered some initial perspectives on their interest and contribution. The Board noted the summary of the role of trustees which had been circulated and thanked Tony and Ian for their hard work in arriving at this first Board meeting. The Board agreed that unless Civic Voice was relevant to the needs and wishes of the membership it would not be successful.

2. Board ambitions and aspirations

Paula introduced a wide ranging discussion stimulated by the questions provided by staff. The discussion emphasised the importance of Civic Voice demonstrating its value quickly through a combination of profile raising, campaigning, policy influencing and, above all, supporting local civic societies to become stronger. It was agreed that members needed to see these benefits by March 2011 in time for the renewal period.

The potential for Civic Voice to help members learn from each other and benefit from the experience of other groups was emphasised. It was noted that Civic Voice could add real value by synthesising the lessons learned from different activities and providing

toolkits on relevant issues which could be used by anyone. The value of drawing attention to the volunteers behind the most successful projects was highlighted.

The discussion noted the challenges of both attracting volunteers and growing membership. It was agreed that local groups which provide a wide variety of volunteering opportunities through a range of projects and activities can be the most successful. The value of competitions and awards was also recognised. The Board also discussed the potential of an awareness raising initiative which provided a focus for civic society activity and also reached out into the wider community, such as a national “civic day” and asked to discuss this at a future meeting (**Action TB 1/10**). There was some discussion that this approach should take a wider approach than “heritage” and look beyond existing opportunities such as Heritage Open Days.

The Board agreed that if civic societies could see their memberships growing and local profile being raised then this would be a clear benefit from Civic Voice.

3. Strategy and workstreams

The Board considered a paper outlining the strategy and workstreams for Civic Voice in its initial phase. This drew heavily on the work of the Civic Society Initiative in defining the purpose, vision and values and the Board agreed that it was essential to “hit the ground running” rather than go over this ground again. The paper identified four broad workstreams:

- Strengthening civic societies
- Raising our profile and influence
- Sustainable and independent
- Improving the way we work

and proposed an initial set of success measures.

The Board welcomed the paper and praised its ambition while recognising the need to both prioritise and make the most of volunteer as well as staff resources. It was agreed there would be value in staff identifying and liaising with a range of volunteers interested in contributing at more than a local level (**Action TB 2/10**).

There was some discussion over the role individual trustees could play in supporting particular workstreams and in monitoring the pulse among members in their part of the country. It was agreed this would be useful but should avoid an impression of representing different areas. Staff were asked to provide an outline presentation for Board members (**Action TB 3/10**) and to be informed of speaking or meeting engagements (**Action All 4/10**). The Board also recognised the value of raising its own profile where meetings or events are held in different parts of the country.

Tony outlined the different partnerships which Civic Voice was involved in and the rationale behind them. Some of these would be long term commitments (e.g. Heritage Alliance) while others might be more tactical. The Board recognised the value of partnership working but also stressed the risk of too much time and effort being absorbed in managing and participating in the arrangements and the need for Civic Voice to retain a distinctive role. The question of the Civic Panel – involving up to 10 voluntary sector partner organisations – was raised and it was agreed to discuss this at

the next meeting, especially given the level of interest from potential participants (**Action TB 5/10**).

The funding needs to support the strategy and workstreams were discussed and the Board requested a paper to the next meeting (**Action TB 6/10**). This should address the contribution Civic Voice could make to strengthening civic societies level of ambition and the approach to fundraising and managing reserves, as well as the strategy for raising funds directly for the charity. The value of a clear evidence base to support decisions on fundraising and other issues was stressed.

The Board approved the Strategy and workstreams as the basis for Civic Voice's activities in its initial phase.

4. Budget and staffing

Tony summarised the principles behind the outline budget for Civic Voice – that the long term aim was to see Civic Voice secure financial independence through its core costs being funded from the civic movement and that this should be achieved after 3 years. He summarised the position relating to the different sources of transitional funding support, especially English Heritage, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Communities and Local Government and the scope for appropriate project funding support from HLF and CABE.

The Board agreed the outline budget and approved funding proposals being prepared for Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Communities and Local Government and HLF based on the strategy and finalised with the Chair (**Action TB/PR 7/10**).

The Board had a discussion about the appointment of Tony Burton and Ian Harvey as Director and Co-ordinator respectively in their absence. They were conscious that the salaries represented a big investment for Civic Voice given the size of its funds, but believed they were a proper investment in the future of the organisation based on the two individuals' track records to date. They noted that the new salary level represented a significant cut for the Director. It was agreed that the Chair should sign off the job descriptions and terms of employment and with the Treasurer make arrangements for the payment of pensions into the group personal pension scheme which Tony and Ian had used with the North of England Civic Trust at a rate of 6% (**Action TB/PR 8/10**).

The Board also agreed that any future appointments should be made following public advertisement.

5. Future meeting arrangements

The Board considered a paper summarising views on preferences for the length, frequency, location and timing of future meetings. It was agreed to meet in June, July, September and November with the first meeting on Thursday 10 June at 3.30pm in London. The value of rotating the location of meetings and between week days and Saturdays was agreed. Tony was asked to sound out availability for the other dates (**Action TB 9/10**) and Helen and Freddie agreed to consider venues (**Action FG/HM 10/10**). The likelihood of an October AGM was noted.

6. Transition arrangements

The Board considered a paper addressing a number of transition issues.

The Board authorised changes to the banking mandate for Paula Ridley and Martin Meredith to be signatories alongside Tony Burton and Ian Harvey. It was agreed cheques over £1,000 should require two signatories, one of whom must be a trustee **(Action TB 11/10)**.

The Board considered proposals for Civic Voice's insurance arrangements and requested further information on the options available with or without trustee liability and professional indemnity cover **(Action TB 12/10)**.

Martin proposed and it was agreed to seek an auditor in the Chester area in advance of the end of Civic Voice's first year end on 30 June 2011 **(Action MM 13/10)**.

There were no declarations relating to any potential conflict of interest.

It was agreed that approved Minutes from Board meetings should be posted on Civic Voice's website **(Action IH 14/10)**.

It was agreed it would be helpful to have papers circulated a week in advance and they should be clear on what the Board was being asked to decide **(Action TB 15/10)**.

7. Director's report

Tony gave a brief verbal update on:

- ☛ The launch of Civic Voice (including the visual identity and website) and the associated media coverage
- ☛ The contributions from the three Party Leaders to the Love Local campaign
- ☛ Membership of Civic Voice having reached 160 civic societies, with 37,000 members and how this was continuing to grow unabated
- ☛ Plans to issue three different e-bulletins for different purposes *civic* (for external audiences and supporters joining through the website); *your voice* (replacing the Initiative's *Bulletin*); and *civic sense* (replacing *Civic Matters*)
- ☛ Plans to ask civic societies to encourage new MPs to participate in the Love Local campaign
- ☛ The practical arrangements in registering the new Board, revamping the welcome pack, finalising the National Trust partnership and developing the databases which lie behind Civic Voice
- ☛ The work required to prepare a series of important funding bids
- ☛ The next phase of the Street Pride campaign with five campaign workshops in the next two months and four briefing notes about to be published
- ☛ Ongoing involvement in the future of Heritage Open Days, including through membership of the new HODs steering group.

It was agreed that a summary written report should be provided by the Director for each meeting, including a record of relevant meetings **(Action TB 16/10)**.

8. AOB

There was no AOB.