



# Board of Trustees

7 April 2011  
MADE, Birmingham

## MINUTES

Paula Ridley (Chair)  
Freddie Gick  
David Lovie  
Helen Marcus  
Martin Meredith  
Neil Sinden  
David Tittle  
John Walker

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

### 1. Apologies

There were apologies from Carl Carrington.

### 2. Minutes of meeting of 27 January 2011

The January Minutes were signed.

Tony provided an update on the funding proposals which had been submitted to DCLG on supporting communities in planning and to English Heritage on Heritage Open Days. An announcement from DCLG was expected imminently and English Heritage would be expected to make an announcement in May. The Board emphasised the importance of these programmes for Civic Voice and the need to ensure they brought real benefits for civic societies. It was agreed that Paula would help ensure the quality of the programme of support provided if we are successful in the DCLG bid.

### 3. Director's report

Tony summarised his report and highlighted the work being done to secure new members and renewals, engage volunteers through the two Spring Network events and influence the localism agenda.

There was a discussion about the importance of internal communication within civic societies as it was clear that many committee members and ordinary members were not aware of the support available from Civic Voice. It was agreed to encourage groups to

identify someone to act as a “Civic Voice champion” to promote communications **(Action 8/11 IH)**.

The Board welcome the establishment of the Planning Panel and asked to be kept in regular touch with its advice and activity, including through the Director’s Report at meetings.

There was a discussion about the implications of the Government’s recent statements on economic growth for localism and the commitment to neighbourhood planning. The Board agreed this was having an unfortunate impact in dissuading people from getting involved and heightening cynicism about the new arrangements. One suggestion made was to encourage local councils to identify a “localism champion”.

Tony drew attention to recent work influencing the debate over HS2 and also the establishment of English Heritage’s priorities through the National Heritage Protection Plan. He reported the creation of CABE within the Design Council and it was agreed to approach it about joining the Civic Panel **(Action 9/11 TB)**.

Tony also reported a delay in commencing the project looking at the history of the civic movement because of the ill health of the researcher.

Tony and Ian were congratulated on the sheer amount of work and range of activity undertaken since the January Board meeting.

#### **4. Strategy and budget to 2013**

Tony and Martin introduced the proposed strategy, budget and success measures. It was agreed that the strategy was robust and needed only minor changes to emphasise the work developing around our “common voice”.

The proposed budget confirmed the need to have developed significant additional income by June 2012 to secure a sustainable future for Civic Voice. Martin confirmed that the priority was to increase income as the budgeted expenditure was necessary to maintain the momentum of Civic Voice. The Board confirmed its continuing aspiration for core funding to be provided by civic societies. It also confirmed the need to explore further project funding and core funding support from others and Tony reported on funding proposals to DCLG and English Heritage.

It was agreed that trustees could take a stronger lead in strengthening corporate relationships and John, Freddie and Martin would work together to develop this funding source **(Action 10/11 JW/FG/MM)**.

Other suggestions included a more targeted approach to increasing membership and exploring the potential for appeals. Trustees agreed they could each play a role in promoting membership in their area drawing on the arguments and evidence provided in *Our first year* **(Action 11/11 All trustees)**.

It was proposed to address funding more strategically at the next awayday **(Action 12/11 TB)**.

There was some discussion of reserves and whether it was desirable to establish a policy of having reserves equivalent to 6 months expenditure, while recognising that Civic Voice was using its annual surplus currently to invest in the following year.

The small changes proposed to the success measures were welcomed, subject to agreeing targets for those not yet adopted at a future meeting.

The Board approved the refreshed strategy and success measures and the budget for 2011-12.

## **5. Developing our common voice**

Tony introduced the revised and extended timetable for the development of our common voice with a view to its conclusion at the October 2012 AGM. The Board agreed this and welcomed the opportunity to allow for proper development of the discussion and debate within the movement. There was some discussion about the importance of civic societies establishing themselves in a position where they can influence outcomes.

In response to questioning, Tony outlined some of the mechanisms which might be used to structure the discussion, including production of provocative think pieces, Dragons Den style challenges, responses to debating propositions and use of the Civic Panel to provide an external perspective.

## **6. Membership report**

Tony referred to the membership results which showed 98 new or renewed members, 16% of whom were new to Civic Voice. The positive response to the Lockton insurance scheme was also noted. It was agreed to seek further information on the nature of the insurance held by civic societies later in the year given the importance of groups having appropriate cover (**Action 13/11 TB**).

## **7. Financial update**

The Management Accounts were introduced by Martin and noted by the Board. Martin confirmed he had monthly meetings to discuss the accounts with staff.

## **8. Civic Day**

Freddie tabled a report which indicated an expectation that approaching 200 groups might participate in Civic Day. He emphasised the support for involving non-members and also for civic societies involving other local groups. Freddie explained the plans to raise the national profile in the media and work with a selection of local media contacts in civic societies.

The Board was encouraged by the progress being made and enthused by the potential of Civic Day in the long term, especially where it could develop in partnership with like minded voices such as "Friends of" groups and residents associations.

There was some discussion about the distinctive contribution of Civic Day – with an emphasis on people and events – viz a viz Heritage Open Days – with its emphasis on towns and free access to buildings.

## 9. AGM and Board elections

Tony explained the broad approach to preparing for the AGM in advance of proposals being put to the Board in June. The Board would be asked to agree the process for filling two vacancies and one member of the existing Board who had been elected by civic societies would need to stand down in advance of the AGM (but could stand for re-election).

There was discussion about the pros and cons of different approaches, including the role of the Nominations Committee which had to be appointed to advise the Board. It was recognised that there could be a large number of nominations to fill the two posts and civic societies would benefit from guidance on which best fits the skills and experience sought while also wanting to be free to vote for any of the candidates.

Tony was asked to work with Paula in advance of the June meeting and to take advice on good charity and electoral practice to inform the Board's decision (**Action 14/11 TB/PR**).

## 10. Success measures

The success measures were noted. Ian reported a growing number of civic societies on twitter as well as the expanding following for Civic Voice.

## 11. AOB

Freddie reported that West MASA had reviewed its role in the light of the development of Civic Voice and the approach to its meetings and was looking to be discontinued (subject to securing the necessary majority). He indicated the value of the Spring Network event approach and was looking to encourage its development as a regular series in different parts of the country, bringing clusters of groups together. In discussion, it was recognised this could be an important contributor to developing our common voice.

John reported on the Department for Education's consultation on the national curriculum and the importance of ensuring citizenship features strongly going forward. He encouraged and the Board supported a Civic Voice response, drawing on the existing partnership with Democratic Life. Tony emphasised the importance of Civic Voice ensuring it was only drawn into debates where it could shape events and make a difference, and the value of a partnership with groups such as Democratic Life in achieving this (**Action 15/11 TB**).

Martin sought the Board's approval to delegate invitation of Hargreaves and Woods to act as Civic Voice's independent examiners to Paula and himself which was agreed (**Action 16/11 MM**).

David T was thanks for his hospitality in hosting the meeting and with an eye to the imminent first anniversary of Civic Voice Paula noted the substantial progress which had been made and thanked all the trustees and staff for their contribution.