



# Board of Trustees

8 September 2011  
PWC, Birmingham

## MINUTES

Paula Ridley (Chair)  
Freddie Gick  
Martin Meredith  
David Tittle  
John Walker

Tony Burton (Director)

### 1. Apologies

There were apologies from David Lovie, Helen Marcus, Carl Carrington and Neil Sinden. Ian Harvey was also unable to attend due to illness.

### 2. Minutes of meeting of 9 June 2011

The June Minutes were signed and there were no matters arising.

### 3. Director's report

Tony introduced his report covering the range of different activity undertaken since the June meeting and including a forward look.

He introduced the programme of events and workshops for civic societies to February which provided a large number of opportunities for face to face debate and discussion between volunteers. A further meeting of volunteers with a good overview and understanding of the civic movement was also proposed to debate how we strengthen civic societies and solicit feedback as part of the wider programme of building strong civic leadership.

The Board noted that it was the first day of the 2011 Heritage Open Days programme and encouraged a strong profile for Civic Voice in HODs once the partnership with the National Trust and The Heritage Alliance took on the national co-ordination role (**Action 26/11 TB**).

There was positive progress in discussions on future funding and Ministerial support in principle from DCLG. If secured this would provide core support and it was recognised that it should in no way fetter our ability to speak out on relevant issues, such as planning reform. The Board also discussed and agreed to a pilot fundraising campaign

using our 10,000 plus email contacts. It was stressed this should be visibly about strengthening and increasing our capacity on a specific programme of work and avoid any risk of being seen as an emergency appeal when our immediate funding position was strong. It was also recognised that the response rate was likely to be low.

Tony explained the latest campaigning around localism and the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This included the likelihood of a third successful amendment to the Localism Bill as a result of our lobbying. This would remove scope for neighbourhood planning to be solely business focused. He stressed the importance of civic societies developing thinking on how they could shape neighbourhood planning and outlined the support being given to access funds and focus political attention on their role, including through a community front-runners programme.

There was a lively discussion about the draft NPPF and the need for Civic Voice to make an impact on the outcome. Tony outlined the problems with the NPPF which had been identified in discussions with the Planning Panel and feedback from civic volunteers and stressed the opportunity of securing a shift in perceptions of the role of planning at the highest political level given the amount of controversy and media debate that has been caused. Civic societies would be encouraged to respond to the draft NPPF and their members to contact MPs during the period after the consultation closes. The Board identified an important role for Civic Voice in moving the debate beyond discussion about the threat to the countryside to focus on the important economic role played by towns and cities and the opportunities for “smart growth” which was well designed and located and respected the historic environment. The Parliamentary All Party Parliamentary Group on civic societies would be launched in the week after the AGM and provided further opportunities for influence. It was agreed that Paula be notified in advance of significant public submission of our views (**Action 27/11 TB**).

Tony updated the Board on the submission on HS2 and reported strong interest from civic societies in the Portas review of the high street.

#### **4. Annual report and accounts**

Tony introduced the Board’s first annual report and accounts and Martin outlined the draft financial summary. It was agreed that the report was important for providing a full explanation of our activities in the early development of Civic Voice but the detail might be reduced in future years. Some changes to the explanation of our vision were also agreed and Martin highlighted some minor changes required to the presentation. There was discussion about possible changes to the financial year end and it was agreed not to amend this.

Freddie proposed and John seconded that the Board reconfirms the policies on reserves and risk management and approved the annual report and accounts in principle, delegating authority to sign off final approval to Paula as Chair. This was agreed unanimously (**Action 28/11 PR/MM**).

It was agreed a short, public facing annual review should be produced in time for the AGM and this would be finalised by Tony with Paula and Martin (**Action 29/11 TB/PR/MM**).

#### **5. AGM and Board appointments**

Tony introduced and the Board agreed the proposed programme for the AGM and national convention in Sheffield. It was agreed to present the Civic Day awards at the Friday reception.

The Board agreed to the recommendations of the Nominations Committee following receipt of five applications to fill the two Board vacancies created by Helen volunteering to stand down and the end of Carl's temporary appointment. In her absence Helen was thanked for her services to the Board since April 2010. It was agreed to discuss the way the Board is operating and whether any action is needed to give it a better gender, geographical or ethnic mix at the awayday (**Action 28/11 PR**).

## **6. Corporate partnerships**

Freddie and John reported on the two teleconferences held to discuss the potential for corporate partnerships and it was agreed this should be included as part of the wider discussion on funding and sustainability at the awayday (**Action 29/11 TB**).

## **7. Membership report**

The Board noted the current membership renewals and the success in attracting over 30 new members with the result that we have over 290 civic societies who have joined, with 75,000 individual members. Ian would be contacting each of those who have not yet renewed individually (**Action 30/11 IH**).

## **8. Financial update**

The Management Accounts (in a revised format) were introduced by Martin and noted by the Board. They showed a healthy financial position and positive forecasts two months into the financial year.

## **9. Awayday**

There was a wide ranging discussion about the awayday and it was agreed this should take stock of our progress and priorities looking ahead, consider how best we define and strengthen the civic movement and address future funding and support (including a more detailed review of membership fee options). The day should be free thinking and not decision making and be based on healthy discussion around key questions rather than detailed papers. There should be an opportunity to meet and learn more about Chester Civic Trust in advance of the awayday beginning. Paula would finalise the agenda in advance (**Action 31/11 PR**).

## **10. Success measures**

The Board noted the success measures for the end of the first year and the new format for 2011-12. There was encouragement for staff seeking further volunteer support and interns whilst recognising this could create extra demands on their time.

## **11. Civic Day**

Freddie reported on the immense success of Civic Day and the Board thanked Ian and him for all their efforts. Freddie highlighted the real potential to expand Civic Day and use it as a focus for strengthening civic societies, bringing in new support and promoting

greater involvement of people in contributing to the place where they live. He particularly emphasised the scope for developing a programme of work around young people.

## 12. AOB

Freddie enquired about the Civic Trust Awards and Tony agreed to remind civic societies that they were now being run independently and on a commercial basis (**Action 32/11 TB**). The Board agreed there was scope to make more of the range of different award schemes run by civic societies.

The Board discussed the draft dates for next year. The Treasurer suggested that the dates should be more aligned with the end of each quarter. This would mean that the January and April meetings would stay as they are, but June would become July and September would become October. Other members saw the point of this. The Chair said that there might be a problem with November as a date for the AGM and the awayday would need to be slotted in somewhere.

There was agreement that two private sessions p.a. should be factored in to Board meetings as a regular item – the Chair suggested that the meeting in March/April might be the obvious one as that was when salaries were discussed, and the other might be at the end of the year. However it was agreed that the first should take place in January 2012.

There was a discussion about the location of Birmingham for one meeting a year. The majority of the Board felt London was an easier location, particularly as we had had events in Manchester and Reading and the Director had produced a list of forthcoming workshops across the country so Civic Voice was evident in other parts of the country.

There was a discussion about the need to communicate better with the membership and the shortcomings of a totally web-based communication system even for Board members themselves. Some members felt there was a case for more hard copy material though they were conscious of the cost of this. It was suggested that we might have a review of communications.

The next meeting will be the awayday on Tuesday 8 November at Chester Civic Trust.