

DRAFT MINUTES
31st March 2016
Bircham Dyson Bell

Freddie Gick (Chair)
Paul Bedwell
Phil Douce
Joan Humble
John Kershaw
Martin Meredith (Treasurer)
Neil Sinden
Roger Sutton
John Walker (Deputy Chair)

Staff

Ian Harvey (Executive Director)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from David Tittle and Christine Furminger.

2. Draft minutes of January 27th (2016) board meeting

It was explained that minutes are important documents as a legal record of the proceedings of an organisation and in particular here of a Company registered under the Companies Acts in respect of which records need to be kept. It was disclosed that some trustees felt that the minutes were not in a format that had previously been agreed.

To add in

- The Chair stated that the Treasurer and Director should communicate with the proposed individual (name excluded from here for confidentiality) to brief him on the role (stressed by the Chair not an 'interview' as stated in the notice) and that the Chair would telephone him in addition.
- 'It was agreed to remove the action that Neil Sinden take forward the process in advertising for new trustees, although it was acknowledged that the Chair did ask him to do this as part of the board managing the transition

It was agreed

- a) For the Director to work with John Kershaw over individual wording on the minutes of previous meeting to ensure they are legally compliant
- b) With the amendments and actions, it was agreed to approve the minutes.

3. Chair's update

The Chair provided a handout that gave an update on activities with particular reference to:

- Expressed huge satisfaction with the Sandys Lecture (held that day in Portcullis House)
- Visit to Dartmouth Civic Society who are non-members and talks to Cockermouth Civic trust and Southgate District Civic Trust

- Attended a workshop with Phil Douce that was led by Anna Wilson and is now trained to deliver war memorial workshops.
- Agreed to continue conversations with Historic Towns Forum and ASHTAV about closer working links as the board felt a closer relationship was appropriate
- Agreed to produce an article for the Considerate Constructors Scheme

The board agreed to thank the Chair for his activities.

4. Staff Update

The Executive Director provided a handout that gave an update on activities.

- The next meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group takes place on April 19th and we have Andrew Murrison MP, attending the meeting. After the meeting, the Houses of Parliament Outreach Team has agreed to arrange a tour of Parliament for students that will be attending the meeting as part of their war memorial work. This tour is a way of us saying thank you to the students who have participated in our war memorial listing programme.
- Our strategy for the APPG is to build up the number of MPs on the group to 100 in time for the Civic Voice AGM in 2016 as another positive announcement for the new Chair. We want to build up the APPG as it demonstrates we are providing a “voice” for our members.
- Agreed to work with Craig Mackinlay’s office to try and find additional ways to raise awareness of the loss of the community voice in planning. It was suggested either an adjournment debate or a Select Committee inquiry may be appropriate and something to consider.
- We have recently been joined by Lord Lucas on the APPG for Civic Societies. He is now the second Lord, after Baroness Andrews supporting the group. We are currently in process of setting up a meeting.
- We submitted our response on the National Planning policy framework and focused on 3 areas:
 - Unintended consequences of the presumption in favour of development on brownfield land
 - Implications of the housing delivery test
 - Loss of the strategic approach to Green Belt

It was agreed:

- c) To work with Craig Mackinlay’s office to try and find additional ways to raise awareness of the loss of the community voice in planning. It was suggested either an adjournment debate or a Select Committee inquiry may be appropriate and something to consider.
- d) The board asked for IH to formally thank staff for the time and effort they are putting into the organisation

5. Finance update

Martin Meredith and Ian Harvey gave a joint presentation on the financial situation for the organisation. A handout was provided with further details.

The presentation explained to the board the complex nature of the organisation in our funding situation and emphasised the importance of both the First World War Programme to supporting

the organisation and the challenge in moving to a viable funding model solely reliant on membership.

It was noted the 43 civic societies pay almost 45% of our membership income highlighting the need for a specific strategy to make the case of membership and that 57 civic societies contribute 3% of our income. The board recognised that although savings can be made, this could also lead to a reduction in quality of service.

It was agreed:

- e) To ask the finance committee to consider the individual elements of spend to consider what further savings could be made and to present another paper to a future board meeting to consider.
- f) To ask the Civic Voice Design Awards panel to consider the various plaques that are available
- g) To consider cost savings with moving board meetings from London to Birmingham
- h) To analyse how much, it costs us to visit civic societies based on what they pay in membership
- i) Martin Meredith to resubmit the accounts to the board, based on the board discussion
- j) To circulate the power point presentation in an electronic format

6. Grade II Project

The Chair introduced a paper on the Grade II Project and stated that the HLF bid is close to being completed and submitted. He thanked the board for the recent email comments which he hoped had now satisfied everyone.

It was explained that this part of the HLF bid is for a stage one pass and any decision to go into a full partnership and to deliver the full project would be for a board 12 months down the line.

The Chair welcomed further comments from the board.

Several board members were concerned that whilst we are happy to play the lead partner role that we are not putting ourselves under undue pressure for responsibilities of other partners that may not be within our ability. Concern was expressed that while the Partnership document specifies that Civic Voice has overall responsibility for delivery of the objectives of the project, it does not have full operational control of the programme which is managed by the Project Board which contains representatives of all the partners.

It was noted that

- The board were making a decision to approve stage one and not to hold any future board to taking forward the project to a full stage two bid.
- Some board members felt that the risk associated with the project placed Civic Voice into a difficult position and that the wording should be changed. The board made it clear that they wanted to minimise accountability.
- Individuals wondered why the partnership agreement doesn't say "the project board is accountable instead of saying Civic Voice". It was stated that as the agreement was legally constituted, it meant that Civic Voice is accountable for delivery of this project.
- We need to have safeguards identified that make it clear that the project board take full accountability and to minimise accountability and risk for Civic Voice

It was agreed:

- k) Any decisions about the project in the next stage will be for the Board to make at that time.
- l) To proceed with submission of the bid to HLF, noting the concerns expressed above.

7. Membership Committee Update

The membership sub-committee provided an update on their work since January and provided minutes from the previous two meetings.

It was felt that changing Individual Member to Individual Supporter would lead to a significant increase in income. It was suggested that a target of 500 individual supporters would be appropriate.

It was agreed:

- m) To co-opt Phil Douce to the membership-sub committee
- n) To change "Individual Member" category to "Individual Supporter"
- o) That additional co-options would be allowed on the membership committee but that they would need prior approval by the Chair of Civic Voice
- p) That the membership sub-committee would present to the next meeting a plan to increase Individual supporters. It was suggested that a target of 500 individual supporters (in addition to the £10k increase of civic society membership) may be appropriate in the short term for the membership sub-committee.

8. HCCA Update

A paper was provided to the board from John Walker.

HCCA is a new alliance of civic societies in historic towns and cathedral cities which has been formed under the umbrella of Civic Voice.

2. The alliance was officially launched at the Civic Voice Convention in Bristol in October 2015.

1. A successful APPG meeting on Historic Towns and Cathedral Cities at Portcullis House on 8th March 2016 was attended by 135 people. Speakers included Richard Bates, Griff Rhys Jones, Duncan McCallum and Craig MacKinlay.

2. 25 civic societies have now joined the HCCA and more are expected over the next few months.

3. The HCCA Steering Group comprises David Evans (Chester), Ian Green (Oxford), Noel James (Historic Towns Forum), Jan Pahl (Canterbury and Chair), David Turnock (Peterborough), John Walker (Civic Voice), Chris Winter (Wells).

3. The steering group are working on a Civic Voice/APPG paper to be launched at an HCCA event at the conference in October 2016 in Chester. The paper will have input from Richard Bate, Historic England, and the Historic Towns Forum. It is intended that the paper can be used to draw attention to these issues in any future review of the NPPF.

9. War Memorial Update

The Executive Director gave a verbal update on the war memorial programme and pointed out that the Department for Culture and Media and Sport are interested in our work in Manchester to try and tie it in with the national commemorations for the Battle of the Somme.

The next meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Civic Societies will continue the Civic Voice focus on the historic environment. The meeting will focus on an issue that was raised at previous APPG meetings; that the historic environment sector faces challenges in bringing in new audiences.

We want to stimulate a debate about how the country is commemorating the First World War; what the legacy from the commemorations will be, how that influences the issues facing the historic environment in the future and what role communities can play in that.

It was noted:

- That DCMS approaching us for updates on our work is a positive message and opportunity that we should be follow up.
- Paul Bedwell explained that he will be attending the Battle of the Somme Centenary event at the Thiepval Memorial after being successful in the national ballot.

It was agreed:

- Q) That John Kershaw will provide an update on the activities of Manchester Civic Society in recording war memorials so the Executive Director can feedback to DCMS before mid-April
- r) To produce a report demonstrating the benefits that the war memorials project is bringing to Civic Voice in regard to news stories, people attending workshops etc

10. Succession planning

As agreed in the January 2016 board meeting, the board agreed that they had collective responsibility for managing the change in the best interests of the charity.

The board held a discussion in which it was noted that while it is quite right that much of the attention of the Board is focused on who should take on the roles of Chair and Treasurer from October 2016, it is also necessary to consider who will assume many of the other responsibilities currently undertaken by other trustees who will also be standing down at that time.

The board held a discussion about the pros and cons in changing the election period for Civic Voice trustees so that we can identify new trustees before the October AGM so that they have a period of "induction" prior to joining the board.

The board then held a conversation about the role of Treasurer. Two applications have been received for consideration as potential co-options to the board. The board considered the approach going forward.

It was agreed:

- s) For a panel consisting of the Chair, Treasurer and Phil Douce to meet the two candidates interested in becoming treasurer post October 2016. It will be for this nomination committee to put forward a candidate to the board with the expressed wish that they then work with the current Treasurer and Executive Director for the next six months.

- t) For the Executive Director to prepare a paper and put in place the systems necessary for the board to consider fully at the May meeting the suggestion that the Trustee elections be brought forward.
- u) Individual trustees whose tenure extends beyond October to identify between now and May any areas of work where they would wish to take over and begin to familiarise themselves with what is involved while their colleague is still around.

11. Civic Survey 2016

Civic Survey is the annual assessment of the state of the civic society movement. Findings from Civic Survey 2015 but published in 2016 will be shared with the movement and will help shape and guide the activities of Civic Voice for the next 12-18 months.

It was noted:

- That 2/3rd of our members rate us Civic Voice 4 out of 5 or higher in regard to our performance and work that we are doing.
- That many civic societies are losing members and that this present long term challenges for Civic Voice and the membership sub-committee should be considering a membership development plan

It was agreed:

- v) To publish the results and discussing them with the regional forum in May. We will then approach each regional forum to present the results.

12. Resources and Priorities

The Executive Director introduced a paper and explained that in November, we agreed to prioritise staff time and energy on focusing on war memorials and APPG and making them the priority until an April review. This has been followed, even though not all trustees have been happy with this. We now need to review these priorities.

It was noted:

- Since we established, we have relied heavily on the dedication of a small number of trustees and staff who have consistently worked above the agreed and legal hours under employment law as noted to the board in the July 2015 board meeting.
- The Executive Director can see that staff wellbeing and illness has started becoming an issue. Recently all members of the Liverpool office picked up a flu-type bug and in the space of two weeks, all the team needed several days off from the office.
- Limited resources are likely to become even more of an issue when Niamh Bradshaw leaves the organisation as she has been offered a graduate management position with Fujitsu.
- The board and all individual trustees have legal responsibilities and a duty of care to the staffing team.

It was agreed:

- w) To make the APPG and War Memorials operational priorities until October 20176
- x) For the Executive Director to prepare a paper for the next meeting to consider priorities and areas of work between now and October recognising that some projects/activities may need to stop

13. Conservation Area Campaign for 2017

The Executive Director explained to that the board that we are developing a project that celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act in 2017.

It was noted:

- This is a good opportunity for the civic movement to celebrate and raise awareness of its work
- Connects our work with Laura Sandys and Lord Duncan Sandys
- Could be a project that supports civic groups and others to receive training in how to undertake a conservation area appraisal

It was agreed:

- y) It was agreed to work up a project paper in partnership with Historic England and recognise the staffing resources and pressures we have.
- z) To further develop and refine ideas for a proposed *My Conservation Area Matters* campaign that would be launched at the 2016 AGM

14. Annual Convention

The Executive Director explained that to run the Annual Convention to the current level, we have a total expenditure of approximately £12,000. We base this on five years' experience so whilst we can make savings, the ball park figure is in this region.

The strategy of the convention and its purpose in building a movement and the importance to groups was discussed. We have long term ambitions to make the Annual Convention as large as the Women's Institute which attracts several thousand members.

It was proposed that as a way to increase income to off-set the Convention, that the board should consider increasing the ticket fee from £40 to £50 which would add an extra £1250 to our budget.

It was agreed:

- aa) To keep the pricing structure for the AGM at the £40 level recognising that this may mean we run the event at a loss

15. Website/Communications Review

Paper was deferred until the next board meeting.

16. Regional Forum Proposal

IH introduced a paper from the Chair of the Regional Forum, Tony Fooks. Tony had prepared a paper on behalf of the regional forum expressing that Civic Voice organise a series of conferences around the country on the planning system. It was explained that any conference would need to be shaped with Sarah James and the expert panel providing input.

It was agreed:

- bb) Accept the principle of the Regional Forum paper and for the Executive Director to agree an approach with the Regional Chair
- cc) Allow the regional forum to take the lead on such an initiative.

17. AOB

The board expressed thanks to Bircham Dyson Bell for offering Civic Voice support once again in providing a central London venue for us.

It was agreed:

- dd) Executive Director to thank Bircham Dyson Bell for meeting room

18. Private Business

There was no private business

Meeting ended at 5.15pm