

**25<sup>th</sup> November**

**2015**

1pm - 4pm

321 Bradford Street, Birmingham

Freddie Gick (Chair)  
Paul Bedwell  
Phil Douce  
Joan Humble  
John Kershaw  
Martin Meredith  
Neil Sinden  
Roger Sutton  
David Tittle

**Staff**

Ian Harvey

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from John Walker and Christine Furminger

**2. Draft minutes of September and October board meetings.**

- The board approved the minutes from the board meeting in September (London)
- The board approved the minutes from the board meeting in October (Bristol)

**3. Governance and Induction Process**

IH introduced a paper stating that according to the Charity Commission expectations of a "high performance board" and an effective Board - "should organise its work to ensure that it makes the most effective use of the time, skills and knowledge of trustees" and "Trustees should understand their duties and responsibilities and should have a statement defining them".

To adhere to this and to continuing with the Trustee Induction process that we have agreed, it seemed appropriate that we put in place individual trustee agreements setting out the time commitment and area of expertise for each Trustee. To do this, we need to know what time commitment people can put forward so we can agree with each of you. We can then add this knowledge to the "skills audit" you have already submitted

A discussion pursued with a difference in opinions about the need for such a document and the legal standing of such a document if someone did not "undertake the house stated." It was emphasised that any volunteer agreement would set out expectations and intentions, not obligations, and is binding in honour only, but as Joan Humble stated would give the staff more certainty about what resources we have available to deliver our activities.

Phil Douce explained that if we do not have the resources via staff, trustees of volunteers, we then need to consider what our activities are and whether we can deliver everything we have planned. Paul Bedwell agreed.

**Action**

- It was agreed that IH would circulate the Individual Agreement and all trustees to respond

**4. Risk Register**

IH introduced an updated Civic Voice Risk Register and explained that charity trustees should regularly review and assess the risk faced by the charity in all areas of its work and plan for the management of those risks. Paul Bedwell stated that risk is an everyday part of charitable activity and managing it effectively is essential if the trustees are to achieve their key objectives and safeguard the charity.

The guidance provided to trustees outlined a variety of risks that could be an issue for Civic Voice but that it should help trustees set a risk framework that allows them to

- Identify the major risks that apply to their charity
- Make decisions about how to respond to the risks they face
- Make an appropriate statement regarding risk management in their annual report.

Neil Sinden stated that he welcomed receiving such a document and felt it was long needed for Civic Voice to meet our governance obligations and stated that he wanted to see the Risk Register as a high priority item on all future board meetings.

#### **It was agreed to**

- Make the risk register a standing item on the board agenda
- It should be highlighted and easily identifiable to see any changes to the risk register between board meetings
- The risk register should be split into Governance, Finance, Legal and Staffing

#### **5. Chair's update**

Freddie gave an update on his current activities.

#### **Noted:**

- We should continue conversations with John Thompson and Partners about Collaborative Planning
- The Grade II project continues and an update will be given in further detail later in the meeting
- Baroness Andrews has agreed to act as an advocate for Civic Voice in the House of Lords
- The All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies had re-registered at the start of November. Freddie thanked Craig Mckinlay for taking up the post as Chair
- He had attended a meeting at DCLG to discuss Assets of Community Value and how more heritage buildings could be listed as Assets of Community Value.
- Freddie felt that the AGM was a success and thanked Bristol Civic Society for all their support in making it happen

#### **Agreed:**

- The board thanked Freddie for the time and effort he is investing into Civic Voice. It was agreed that with the time dedicated, it gives Civic Voice a considerable additional resource
- That Freddie continue the Grade II project.
- That Civic Voice submit a response to the review of the Localism Act with the guidance of the expert panel. This would build on from our ACV campaign.

#### **6. Staff Update**

The Executive Director gave an update on staff activities particularly noting

- The launch of the All Party Parliamentary Group on civic societies
- A visit to Clarence House by 13 civic societies to meet HRH Prince of Wales

- Highlighting our partnership project with the Houses of Parliament Outreach team to deliver workshops across the country as part of national Parliament Week, particular noting a quote praising Civic Voice from John Bercow MP.
- Colin Davis who is now on our expert panel has agreed to work with eight civic societies around projects on public realm

## **7. Membership Committee Update**

The membership sub-committee reported back and said they are planning another meeting.

## **8. Membership Figures Update**

A membership report, produced by office apprentice Amber Louise-Palmer was shared with the group and it was agreed that Amber Palmer would contact individual Trustees direct to agree a “target” list of civic societies to approach.

All trustees wanted it recorded their thanks sent to Amber for her hard work in producing the report and that they hope she was enjoying her time with Civic Voice.

The point was made by Joan Humble that we should maybe regard late payment from some groups as a “yellow alert” that maybe the group may be struggling and that we should consider this in our conversations with them.

### **Agreed:**

- IH to send thanks to Amber from the trustees
- That the membership subcommittee should consider a “membership development plan” to help support struggling civic societies

## **9. Succession Planning**

Freddie introduced a paper setting out thoughts in relation to succession planning and the challenge that the organisation faces in the next 18 months with a number of trustees departing the board. he stated that it is the responsibility of the full board to manage the transition and to agree who the new Chair should be.

Joan Humble that we shouldn't try and micros manage the approach and that the appointment of a strong deputy and treasurer is as important as the Chair and that we may not need a Chair to do the job in the same way as Freddie. It was pointed out that this was part of the reason we need individual trustees to agree time commitments as it will help with knowing what the role of a future Chair might look like.

Paul Bedwell stated that we should all start thinking about people we know that we believe would be suitable for the organisation.

### **It was agreed:**

- To all feedback on the job descriptions previously provided to trustees for the positions of Chair, Treasurer and Trustee.
- To promote that we are seeking Trustees via civic update and the various “trustee recruitment websites”
- To specifically advertise for a “Trustee focused on fundraising”
- To ask for Expressions of Interest before 31<sup>st</sup> January
- A small sub-group will then consider next steps

## **10. Civic Action / First Steps**

Civic Voice is a partner in the delivery of the First Steps contract for 2015-16. The project is being managed and administered by CDF (Community Development Foundation) on behalf of Locality. The contract between Civic Voice and CDF primarily requires Civic Voice to provide a 'Relationship Manager' to provide direct support and advice to five community groups, who are taking their 'first steps' into community rights. Sarah James is this relationship manager. Each of these groups is involved in local "civic action" projects and helping to shape the local area. None of them are civic societies.

The board held a discussion and decided to vote on whether to welcome these groups as members. The vote in favour was all in favour with one abstention

### **It was agreed:**

- That we should ask each the groups involved what it would take (benefits) for them to become members of Civic Voice
- Where suitably interested in becoming Civic Voice members we should encourage them to join
- The board agreed for the team to continue possible discussions with Locality and partners if the First Steps program is continued in 2016-2017

## **11. War Memorials**

IH introduced an update on the War Memorial program and explained that whilst a programme of general awareness-raising workshops aimed communities around the country is desirable, it is not sufficient on its own to raise the profile of the project to achieve the targets set by DCMS. For this reason, we intend to ramp up the PR side of our engagement activities, directly targeting specific stakeholders in order to foster more sustained participation in the programme.

If the final target of 20,000 condition surveys is to be achieved (currently standing at 200), the current approach needs to be supplemented by additional, more intensive initiatives aimed more proactively coordinating the completion of surveys. Providing volunteers with more support and direction over a longer period of time than simply a one-off workshop is likely to be a more fruitful approach.

Each trustee provided an updated report on their local activity with particularly active work taking place in Cheltenham, Chester, Worcester, Sheffield, Blackpool and Coventry.

### **Action**

- It was agreed to reallocate staff to ensure that for the next 6 months we prioritise delivery of the war memorials program

## **12. Grade II**

The board were given a verbal update by the Freddie on the current status of this project. It was explained that we are currently the lead partner with Historic England in a bid to HLF for around £2M to manage a team of volunteers in carrying out assessments of a very large number of Grade II listed buildings. The ultimate purpose of the project is to establish a list of Grade II buildings at risk, to support owners of these buildings in ensuring their effective maintenance and generating a substantial pool of people who become more active heritage volunteers.

Phil Douce from Worcester gave a detailed update on his experience of being one of the national pilot projects for this activity.

### **Action:**

- The board agreed for the Freddie to continue conversations and to update when required.

### **13. Civic Day**

Roger Sutton gave an update on plans for Civic Day 2016 and stated that our approach will be focused around developing partnership and asking civic societies to “do something”.

The group held a conversation about the long term benefits that Civic Day can bring to the organisation and movement.

#### **Action**

- Agreed that funding for Civic Day should be a priority for the fundraising group.

### **14. Civic Design Awards**

IH gave a short update on the Civic Voice Design Awards and explained that this year we plan to make the Design Awards even bigger and better than last year. Although we have opened for applications we have an official launch date set down as 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015. We plan to launch the event from last year’s winner, Gloucester Services, and make it a joint event with the plaque unveiling. The event is set to take place between 12pm-2pm. Griff Rhys Jones has confirmed he can do this date with Max Farrell (chair of the judges) also confirming he can. This could be a great opportunity to get a lot of press coverage especially with the backing of Griff and Max.

Max Farrell is returning as the chair of the judges this year with Rob Cowan, Sophia deSousa and Tracy Mellor all to follow suit in their respectful roles. This year Max will send a representative to judge for him in the first session and then will participate in the second session as a judge.

Craig Mackinlay MP and William Wragg MP (new APPG chair and vice chair) have both kindly agreed that they will get us a room in Parliament to host the awards ceremony which we expect to take place in late May.

### **15. AOB**

A short discussion was held about future locations of meetings. IH explained to the board that the cost for meetings in Birmingham V London was a 50% saving which could result in savings in over £2000 over a year. IH also explained that 5 trustees are now based in the Midlands so it saves on time for the majority of the board.

John Kershaw felt that meetings in London were more suitable for a national charity and explained that getting to London was easier for him than from Manchester. A short discussion was held and it was agreed to consider the venue at the January meeting.

#### Future meetings

All future meeting dates available via <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/meetings/>