



2011 AGM

The second AGM was hosted by Sheffield Civic Trust at Sheffield Showroom and Workstation

October 15th 2011

MINUTES

The second AGM was attended by 128 people and 60 civic societies (53 members of Civic Voice).

1. Welcome

Paul Bedwell (Sheffield Civic Trust) called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to Sheffield before handing over to Paula Ridley (Chair, Civic Voice). Paula welcomed delegates and thanked Paul for the generosity everyone had experienced during their tours of Sheffield the previous day and thanked him and his colleagues for all their efforts.

Paula introduced a video message from Griff Rhys Jones (President, Civic Voice). This highlighted the urgency of tackling the planning policy reforms and thanked civic volunteers for their enormous efforts on behalf of their different areas.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Doncaster Civic Trust, Hartlepool Civic Society, Bloomsbury Association, Bankside Residents Forum, Lancaster Civic Society, Wimborne Society, Oxford Civic Society, Scarborough Civic Society, Tynemouth Village Association, Wallasey Civic Society, Rotherham Civic Society and from Helen Marcus.

3. Minutes of 2010 AGM, Peterborough

The minutes were proposed by **Hunstanton Civic Society** and seconded by **Bristol Civic Society** and signed as a true record.

4. Annual report and accounts 2010-11

Chair's presentation

Paula Ridley introduced the trustees' first report and accounts and reflected on the impact of Civic Voice and the successful work undertaken by civic societies during the year. She indicated a belief that the civic movement could be as successful as

the green movement. Civic Day was highlighted as the start of something very important and Paula stressed the value of delivering it in partnership with other local groups. She expressed astonishment that the Government appeared not to expect a row over its planning policy reforms which put everyday places at risk. Paula highlighted the key role which Civic Voice was playing influencing discussions on planning and localism.

Paula thanked all the civic societies she had visited for their hospitality and welcome and paid tribute to the work of civic volunteers across the country. She encouraged civic societies to make good use of the support provided by Civic Voice, ranging from a free NCVO helpline to free passes to the National Trust and English Heritage. She also pointed to the importance of participating in Heritage Open Days now that this had returned to being co-ordinated by the voluntary sector.

Paula paid particular thanks to Freddie Gick and the Civic Day team and to the trustees and staff.

Paula continued by emphasising the importance of two-way communications and inviting views on how this could be improved so information was circulated and feedback provided by more than a few officers in each civic society.

Paula concluded by pointing to the potential of the civic movement to be part of the advance guard of participatory democracy, growing its support and widening its base to become even more powerful intermediaries in different communities.

Director's report

Tony Burton made a presentation which looked at the work undertaken by Civic Voice in its first year in four main areas (summarised in the Annual Review):

- Strengthening civic societies
- Becoming more sustainable and independent
- Improving the way we work
- Raising our profile and influence

Tony highlighted some of the important external changes which had been going on, pointing to the response to the summer disturbances as evidence of a huge groundswell of support for and love of local neighbourhoods which civic societies could tap into. He also drew attention to other changes, including the growth of local social networks, launch of Your Square Mile, community organisers and the decline in professional conservation and archaeological staff in local authorities to fewer than 1,000. These could all be seen as threats but also opportunities for civic societies in playing a more significant role in their local area.

Looking ahead, Tony highlighted the importance of Civic Voice taking responsibility for the future of Heritage Open Days and urged as many civic societies as possible to get involved. He also stressed the critical importance of neighbourhood planning and drew attention to the availability of free support for civic societies; encouraging everyone to help the Government run out of the money it was providing to communities so that more could be demanded in future.

Tony asked for the meeting's support for the new Campaign for fair planning which was intended to help maintain pressure on the Government as it decided on the future national planning policy framework.

Tony concluded by drawing attention to the power of the civic movement where it was able to work together providing examples and evidence to influence national debate which in turn could support local action. He drew attention to the plans to strengthen the "common voice" of the movement through clear articulation of what we stand for in a "prospectus" and clearer expression of our views and a shared approach to campaigns.

Tony thanked the Board for its support and – to acclamation – Ian Harvey (Co-ordinator) for all that he does for the civic movement. He concluded by expressing his constant amazement at the commitment and creativity of civic societies around the country and the potential of bringing this together as an even more influential voice in the land.

Discussion

There was a wide ranging discussion on the trustees report and the presentations:

Bristol sought more information on the Government's traffic signs review

- ☞ This would be provided in a future *civic sense*

On planning, **Retford** urged the need to get the balance right and **Cambridge** encouraged a strong emphasis on the quality and design of new development. **Altrincham and Bowdon** expressed concern that the draft NPPF was already being applied in planning decisions and **Burton on Trent** sought further information on the fair planning campaign

- ☞ It was clarified that the draft NPPF is indeed already a "material consideration" and suggested that one approach to ensuring quality was to ask the question whether a development was "good enough to accept". Delegates were steered towards the website for further information on the Campaign for fair planning where a draft letter for MPs was available.

Fleet and Church Crookham enquired about the All Party Parliamentary Group on civic societies and **Pontefract** indicated their local MP may not be able to get involved as a shadow minister.

- ☞ The first meeting of the APPG would be in November and all civic societies would be contacted in advance asking them to contact their local MP(s) encouraging them to attend

Oxton raised the issue of the loss of conservation staff which meant that their local authority had declared itself incapable of delivering conservation area legislation. **Canterbury** indicated its local authority conservation officer had joined the civic society and was now performing the function in a voluntary capacity

- ☞ It was agreed that the decline in local authority staff placed an even greater emphasis on partnership working with civic societies

Blackpool encouraged groups to look at the range of people involved in their work and encourage different communities to join in

- It was agreed that it was important for civic societies to have an open approach and the support available for neighbourhood planning might provide a further way of achieving this

Hunstanton encouraged the partnership approach with other national groups and commended the Civic Panel

- The make up of the Civic Panel was explained and the trustee nominated through it (Neil Sinden) was introduced

Treasurer's report

Martin Meredith introduced the 2010-11 accounts by reviewing the actual results against budget and providing a breakdown of the main income and expenditure lines. This showed a strong performance on income against budget and a surplus for the year which was being re-invested back into Civic Voice during its first few years. Martin also presented a summary budget for 2011-12 which showed a declining surplus and a continuing high dependency on external grants. He emphasised the importance of continuing to grow the support from civic societies. He indicated he would be happy to deal with more detailed questions outside the meeting.

Burton on Trent enquired whether it was intended that events should break even and Martin indicated that the Board felt it important to have as good an attendance as possible at Civic Voice events. **Leeds** asked for a breakdown in the general grants which Martin indicated were provided by DCLG, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and English Heritage. **Bristol** stressed the importance of generating support for Civic Voice from those who do not come to events like the AGM. In response to an enquiry from **Cambridge** Tony Burton indicated that continuation of the free passes from English Heritage and the National Trust was subject to negotiation.

5. Ratification of Annual report and accounts 2010-11

Chester Civic Trust proposed and **Leeds Civic Trust** seconded ratification of the trustees' report and accounts for 2010-11.

6. Appointment of independent examiners

Hargreaves and Woods were proposed by **Martin Meredith, Treasurer** and seconded by the **Wimbledon Society**

7. Board elections

Paula Ridley announced the results of the ballot for trustees to join the Board which had generated a response from 75 civic societies.

Helen Marcus	72.5
Paul Clarke	64.5

Ken Mantock	33.5
Anthony Jennings	22
George Chew	1.5

She welcomed Helen Marcus (Heath and Hampstead Society) and Paul Clarke (Todmorden Civic Society) to the Board and thanked all those who had participated.

8. Ratification of Chair (Paula Ridley) and Treasurer (Martin Meredith)

Freddie Gick, Deputy Chair, proposed ratification of Paula Ridley as Chair emphasising her breadth of view and gentle determination in leading Civic Voice. This was seconded by **Hunstanton** and agreed unanimously.

Martin Meredith's ratification as Treasurer was also proposed by **Freddie Gick, Deputy Chair**, who emphasised his transparent, conscientious, no-nonsense approach. This was seconded by **Retford**.

9. Any other business

There was no further AGM business.

Freddie Gick reminded the meeting of the Civic Day Awards and made two further presentation to **Formby Civic Society** (for high youth involvement) and **Malvern Civic Society** (a special award).

Paula Ridley introduced Jo Winyard from Marsh Christian Trust and announced the results of the first Marsh Christian Trust Civic Awards for "outstanding contribution" as follows:

Marsh Civic Society Award

Highly commended: Oxford Civic Society
Oxton Society
Kings Lynn Civic Society
Nantwich Civic Society

Winner: The Wimbledon Society

Marsh Civic Volunteer Award

Highly commended: Gillian Postill (Marple Civic Society)

Winner: Sue Nichols (Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society)

Paula thanked Jo Winyard and Marsh Christian Trust for its support.