



# June 2013 Board Minutes

**Directory of Social Change, 24 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2DP  
12.30 – 4pm.**

Paula Ridley (Chair)  
John Bothamley  
Paul Clarke  
Freddie Gick  
John Kershaw  
Helen Marcus  
Martin Meredith  
Neil Sinden  
David Tittle  
John Walker

Staff  
Steve Graham  
Ian Harvey

## **1. Welcome, apologies and April meeting minutes**

1.1 Paula Ridley welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were given as everyone was in attendance.

1.2 The minutes from the last meeting were agreed on the basis that they be changed to state that JK would chair the private item and not JW. With this change the minutes were agreed and PR signed.

## **2. Officer update**

2.1 Staff gave a verbal update on current officer activities.

2.2. JW asked for the thinking behind Civic Voice's strategy for utilising the All Party Parliamentary Group and how we intend on maximising its use to give the civic movement a greater voice in Parliament. A short discussion was held and the group were informed that as we have now complied with the Parliamentary regulations to hold two meetings per year, we do not have to have another meeting until November. Notwithstanding this, it was felt by some that we may want to run one more event in this Parliamentary year and that we should hold a discussion with Laura Sandys MP (Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group) to find out her thoughts on a possible strategy to utilise the APPG.

2.3 JB explained that he had represented Civic Voice at the recent Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee when Nick Boles was questioned. It was noted that over 100 civic societies had responded to our call for questions to share with the Select Committee and it was pleasing to see 8 of them asked. IH said we shared our questions with the Chair of the Committee, Clive Betts MP.



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2.4 JW informed the group that he had attended a meeting with IH and SG in the Houses of Parliament with Chris Skidmore MP. The meeting was to discuss the further work on the campaign for introducing a Community Right of Appeal. As part of the meeting, Chris Skidmore MP asked if Civic Voice would be interested in acting as the Secretariat for the APPG for Green Belt. A short discussion was held around the impact of the National Planning Policy Framework and how it was impacting on the green belt. It was made clear that as we are currently acting as the Secretariat on the APPG for Civic Societies, Parliamentary rules will not allow us to act for another group. It was agreed by all that we want to support the group and we will send representatives to any meetings but as we have limited resources, and Parliamentary rules do not allow, we unfortunately have to turn Chris Skidmore down.

The board regarded it as positive that an MP is asking us to perform such a task. IH noted that in our recent call to action asking civic societies to encourage their MPs to join such a group, over 50 MPs were contacted by groups.

2.5 PR informed the group that she is helping to sift the "Heritage Angel Awards" which English Heritage award each year.

2.6 Staff gave verbal feedback on the response we have had to the length of minutes being published. Members had responded positively to the fullness of the minutes, notwithstanding some negative comments over how the board were perceived to arrive at some decisions. A short discussion followed on the various levels of detail we could use. It was agreed to keep the minutes as they are for the next few meetings and then maybe review the situation later in the year. All agreed.

2.7 JW updated the group on the President's visit to Kent where he spent 4 days meeting a variety of groups including the Faversham, Canterbury and Ramsgate civic societies. The President's feedback was also positive about the trip in regard to visits and media. NS asked how we went about looking after his time and how do we decide to use Griff. IH explained the rationale to the group behind Griff's availability and what we do/select where he goes.

2.8 All agreed that Griff Rhys Jones is a fantastic President and we are lucky to have him be so strongly associated with Civic Voice.

## **Actions:**

- 2.2 IH to speak with Laura Sandys and her team about APPG
- 2.4 JW to feedback decision to Chris Skidmore MP
- 2.4 IH to report to members about Heritage Angel Awards

## **3. Finance Report**

3.1 MM had previously circulated finance papers and said that the current funding position is the same as reported last time. He made it clear that all funding and finance updates are available to board members at any time and that people do not need to wait for the Board if they have a question over any finance issues.



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## **4. Constitution Review**

4.1 JK introduced a report from the constitution sub-committee and led the report through the different recommendations. A discussion was had around the changes.

4.2 It was agreed that we are putting all the changes to the constitution to the AGM as a "single resolution" rather than a series of changes.

4.3 The main items for discussion were as follows

### **4.3.1 Civic Panel**

The group discussed the "perception" of removing the civic panel from our constitution and the image that this may present to partner organisations. It was agreed to have a commitment from the board that we want to keep the civic panel and to inform our Civic Panel partners of such a move.

### **4.3.2 Clause 38- Make-up of the board**

A discussion was held around the benefit to Civic Voice in increasing the size of the current elected members of the board by an additional 3 members from the current 6 to 9.

It was agreed to put the recommendation to members to decide on.

### **4.3.3 No objections to the nominations committee**

No objections were raised to the removal of the nominations committee

### **40.3**

Decision was made not to propose the new wording for article 40.3.

### **4.3.4 Clause 47**

It was agreed to remove the recommendation to introduce an Honorary Secretary role.

### **4.3.5 Clause 52**

A discussion was held around the wording about introducing a set of "panels" and the word "regional forum" into the constitution. Mixed support existed for creating "regional forums". It was felt that as some areas do not have regional associations, it makes it difficult to introduce a policy that covers the country, but notwithstanding this, NS said we do want to engage with regional views and by creating "panels" this allows us to do so



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HM said the simpler the constitution the better and we should not introduce wording for the sake of it. FG said that there had been a positive response to the regional meetings and we should continue them. HM and JW said we may not want to specifically mention “regional panels” but that maybe we put out a document outlining the pros and cons of introducing such a power. All were in agreement that discussion with regions and clusters can only be a positive for Civic Voice.

## **Action:**

IH and JK to draft a “consultation paper” to inform members when looking at changes to constitution

PR to sign off any document that goes out outlining the pros and cons of the changes

## **5. Membership Review**

5.1 IH gave a current update on the membership figures for the year. It was agreed that we need to keep encouraging civic groups to join as they are key to giving us our mandate with politicians.

## **6. Civic Day 2014**

6.1 IH introduced a paper on Civic Day 2014 and asked the board to consider whether we want to run Civic Day in 2014. A short discussion was held over the 250 events that had taken place for Civic Day 2013 and the board were hugely encouraged at how quickly it has grown as an event, with such a diverse mixture of activities taking place.

6.2 It was agreed to run Civic Day 2014 on June 21 but for IH to check that it does not conflict with other events. IH reported that due to the timing of the year, a lot of other events take place around this time due to the length of days and (almost!) guaranteed good weather, as such, we may run into clashes with other events but that we should be confident that Civic Day can stand on its own in a congested calendar.

6.3 PR recommended that during this week’s civic update we should thank groups for participating.

## **Actions:**

6.2 IH to inform members that Civic Day 2014 will be on June 21

6.3 IH to thank groups for getting involved.

## **7. Transparency**

7.1 IH introduced a paper on creating an “observer role” at future board meetings. The idea for “observer” status had come from a number of the Civic Leadership Delegates. IH informed the board that one of our values as an organisation is our openness and transparency and that we should regard it as a positive that people want to attend board meetings.



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7.2 A discussion took place around this proposal. PR then made it clear to the group that she had agreed with FG that Civic Voice needed to develop a full Code of Conduct as to the responsibilities of Trustees which can be shared with new comers. This would be presented to the September board meeting. As such, it was agreed to defer the matter to September so that such a decision can be taken in line with this review.

## **Actions:**

7.4 PR and FG to work on a Code of Conduct for the September board meeting.

## **8. Civic Survey 2013**

8.1 IH informed the Board that since our launch, we have undertaken two annual surveys, Civic Survey 2011 and Civic Survey 2012. Both surveys have given us a snapshot about our performance and the direction for Civic Voice. IH explained that these surveys demonstrate our values that we are being led by our members' wishes,

8.2 The board were asked to consider whether they wanted to run Civic Survey 2013 while we were consulting on the constitution changes. A short discussion was had by the board. All understood the difficulty with the timing, but notwithstanding this, recognise the considerable benefits that the survey brings to Civic Voice. This was in agreement by all to take this forward and accept we may not get as high response as usual.

## **Actions:**

8.2 IH to draft a survey and seek input from the board members before publishing at the start of September

## **9. AOB**

A discussion took place by the board and it was proposed by the board that Freddie Gick be appointed as Deputy Chair of Civic Voice. The board agreed this unanimously.

## **10. Date of future meetings**

It was agreed that dates for next meetings were to be

11<sup>th</sup> September.

19<sup>th</sup> November.

AGM is the 25<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> October in Liverpool

The Board moved into Private Session