



# Larger Civic Societies

Notes of a meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016  
at Chester Racecourse

## Attendance

Name		Society	Email
David Evans (Convenor)	DE	Chester	<a href="mailto:alpraham@gmail.com">alpraham@gmail.com</a>
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Ian Green	IG	Oxford	<a href="mailto:igreen449@btinternet.com">igreen449@btinternet.com</a>
Vernon Porter	VP	Oxford	<a href="mailto:info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk">info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk</a>
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Lynda Kitching	LK	Leeds	
Alan Morris	AMo	Bristol	<a href="mailto:alan@morris.es.fastmail.fm">alan@morris.es.fastmail.fm</a>
Peter Pickering	PP	Finchley	<a href="mailto:pe.pickering@virgin.net">pe.pickering@virgin.net</a>
Mary Ash	MA	Norwich	<a href="mailto:mary.ash@ntlworld.com">mary.ash@ntlworld.com</a>
David White	DW	Deal	<a href="mailto:david.white@thedealsociety.org.uk">david.white@thedealsociety.org.uk</a>
Barbara Longmore	BL	Bewdley	<a href="mailto:bmlongmore@gmail.com">bmlongmore@gmail.com</a>

DE welcomed members to the meeting. He explained a larger Civic Society was defined as one that paid the maximum (£500) subscription to Civic Voice and that this followed on from a previous meeting in Oxford. As the attendance showed, the size of a civic society was not necessarily related to the size of its town. The purpose of this meeting was to have an informal discussion around the question, "What do your societies want from Civic Voice and how can we serve them better?"

### The following were the key issues raised:

- The greatest value of Civic Voice to societies is its ability to lobby at national level to bring about changes in legislation and government action (VP, DW). Monitoring and responding to government consultations should also be a priority (PP)
- Our approach to lobbying needed to be professional (DW) – Key issues needed to be identified and lobbying directed at the appropriate department, both ministers and civil servants (CR)
- We should not over-rely on the civic societies APPG but also link to other APPGs (such as planning and housing), possibly through the groups who sponsor them (CR).
- Civic Voice's "Expert Panels" do not appear to be functioning as effectively as they could.(VP)

- The APPG meetings were very informative and attending them was a valuable experience (BL)
- Civic Voice needs to communicate better with its member societies about what it is doing and its achievements (AMo). There was general agreement that the weekly bulletins, though valuable to keen activists, are not appropriate to forward to the general membership of societies. Most circulated them only to the committee.
- Possible additional single topic emails (MH) or a quarterly briefing focusing on what had been achieved (AMo) in a form suitable for general distribution would be helpful.
- Civic Voice needed to try and gain a higher media profile (BL) for instance becoming a regular contributor on programmes such as “Today” (PP)
- We should make maximum possible use of our new V-P, Baroness Andrews (IG). Because MPs are inundated with constituency work, the House of Lords is a good route to lobby for policy changes. Lords generally have more time and often more expertise. (CR)
- There was a risk that Finchley Society could leave Civic Voice. They felt that CV had not fought hard enough in the early stages on the Housing and Planning Bill, though they had later worked hard on the 3<sup>rd</sup> party right of appeal. Many London societies felt that the London Forum, which had good links to the Mayoralty, performed many of the tasks that CV might do at lesser cost to the societies.(PP)

In response to a question from DE, there was general agreement that continuation of a Larger Civic Societies Group within Civic Voice was worthwhile. AMo suggested that one of the Board should take a lead on this. DE responded that he felt that that particular role may already have been identified!

There was a consensus that the next meeting should be early in 2017 and Leeds Civic Society expressed their willingness to host it.

DJE 24/10/16