

Minutes of Oxton Society Executive Committee 3rd January 2020 at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

Rhiannon Evans (RE) (Chair)
Jeff Willis (JW) (Vice Chair)
Alan Chape (AC) (Secretary)
Griff Round (GR) (Treasurer)
John Booth (JB) (Hanging baskets)
Patrick Toosey (PT) (Recruitment)
Steve Weber (SW) (Planning and Amenities)
Bob Knowles (BK) (History Group)
Cllr Allan Brame (AB)
Steve Ferguson (SF)
Annette Capper (ACa) (Friends of the Arno)
Chris Jarrey (CJ)
John Heathman (JH)
Carla Walker (CWA)
Graham McLean (GMCL) (Acting Minutes Secretary)
John Field (JF)
Paul Edwards (PE)
Kirsten Edwards (KE)
Joe Venning (JV)

Apologies:

Carolyn Weber (CWe) (Minutes Secretary)
George Harrison (GH) (Tree Group)
Dave Barden (DB) (Membership Secretary)
Dominic Wilkinson (DW)

The Chair welcomed Village business owners Paul (PE) and Kirsten Edwards and artist colleague Joe Venning (JV) for discussion of a proposed Village project. PE outlined a plan to commission one or more murals or other public art for the Village on a theme of Global Warming. He suggested this could relate to the development of the Village as a Green Village, which could be advantageous to business and the Village's general reputation. JV brought some illustrations of possible mural designs and, as time was short, will circulate these to committee members online.

AC expressed his general support for the project but emphasised that it would be necessary to sort out the current planning issue surrounding the 'Tranmere' mural on the wall of Home Cafe before the Society could be involved in any further similar projects. AB indicated that the planning decisions would be resolved fairly soon but, in the light of the controversy surrounding that mural, it would be essential that any new public art work would carry the support of Village residents as a whole.

JW welcomed the start of a conversation on the concept of a Green Village but warned that the Society needs to ensure that it does not go beyond its remit as defined in the Constitution. BK was also in favour of something similar to Hoylake's "Transition Town" but questioned if a mural would necessarily enhance the Village.

RE concluded that the Committee should further discuss the proposed mural(s) and the Green Village as separate issues and give feedback to PE. She thanked PE, KE and JV, who then left the meeting.

Action: AC

The Chair circulated a greetings card for signature to be sent to Carolyn Weber, who was in hospital.

1. The **Minutes** of the Committee Meeting of 7th January 2020 were agreed as a true record.

2. Matters arising

Conservation Areas Wirral (CAW)

AC reported that CAW have now submitted their comments on the Council's Regulation 18 of the Local Plan. This outlines the approach WBC intend to take in preparing the Plan. It has been agreed that each conservation area will have a policy statement.

Friends of the Arno (FoA)

ACa gave a verbal update on FoA activities. She reported that:

- 441 new leaflets had been delivered;
- the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury will visit The Arno/Secret Gardens on 10th May;
- the Council will support the Green Plaque proposal again this year;
- FoA will be submitting for the RHS Britain in Bloom Award again;
- the rose beds are being underplanted and new trees have been planted;
- there will be a plant sale on 21st March;
- the joint calendar with the Society is progressing.

Blue Plaque Scheme

BK reported that the proposed date for the unveiling of the Blue Plaque to the Willmer sisters is 20th June. The timing of the event will be confirmed as soon as possible. The family who own the house in Wellington Road are involved and will contribute to the cost of the plaque.

There is continued interest in the previous dedicatee Edith Smith.

Hanging Baskets

JB reported that 52 baskets will be installed on June 7th. The cost will be 3% up on the previous year. Some maintenance of the brackets etc. will be needed in advance.

An application will be made to RHS Britain in Bloom again this year, in the hope of obtaining a fourth Gold Award.

JB also outlined a proposal for two banners for the Village celebrating the RHS awards; they will stay in place during the summer. JH suggested that they might lead to donations. AB questioned whether the banners might be seen as an advertisement and therefore require planning consent. SW suggested that we should seek advice on this but that it is likely that regulations would permit such a banner for a temporary period.

Action: SW

Street Signs

AC reported that the Council may agree to the Society's recommendations, subject to the Society's contributing to the additional cost of metal signs. AC will contact Shaun Brady of WBCouncil.

Action: AC

Christmas Lights

JW has been in contact with the electrical engineer who will be able to undertake some work later in the year. There will be an additional cost to extend the lights and possibly purchase a Christmas tree. The final net cost to the Society for last year's lights was £1500.

Fundraising proposal

CJ had nothing to report on this matter but would follow it up.

Action: CJ

40th Anniversary booklet

AC explained that there has been a delay and that the design may have to be reconsidered.

Action: AC

New logo

RE showed the design for the new Oxton Society logo:



She will write to thank the designer and will post it on the Society's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Action: RE

Defibrillator (AED)

RE welcomed John Field (JF) to the meeting.

A detailed report on the proposed purchase was circulated. John outlined the decisions that still remain about its purchase and siting. Most of the money, apart from around £240, has been raised by contributions from the Council and individual donors. He recommended a model that costs around £1500, plus installation costs. Some training, possibly from NW Ambulance Service, will be required but that it not extensive, as the equipment relays instructions during its use. Insurance may cost around £50 per year if it is not already covered in the Society's policy.

The target date for installation will be summer 2020. It was agreed that it should have 24-hour access and, to avoid delay in its use, not be locked, unless that subsequently becomes necessary due to vandalism. There was further discussion of the machine's location. An ideal site would be the ATM structure in the Village Centre as the Society owns the freehold of this, but an electricity supply will have to be arranged from adjacent properties. AC will contact Christian Hercules to attempt to discuss this.

Action: AC

3. History Group

A report of the Group was circulated. BK pointed out the current programme for the Village Walks — 16 in total over the year. Digitisation of the history archive has been started but further work is needed before the website goes live. He also mentioned further history talks and the History and Heritage Fair on March 7th.

4. Financial Report

GR circulated a draft report. A surplus of around £5k is predicted, bringing the Society's reserves to around £30k. JW commented that the Society should consider spending some of those funds and GR agreed that the Society can move with comfort to additional expenditure. The Treasurer was congratulated on the favourable financial position.

5. Membership report

The Membership Secretary was not present but had circulated a report, noting that membership was up and that the method of collection, although not ideal, should probably not change. There was discussion about an email sent to all members that was relevant to those who had had a request for a renewal of their membership fee. It was agreed that the email was not misleading if read properly.

6. Tree report

The Tree Group Secretary was not present but circulated a report of the current submissions for tree work.

PT put forward a proposal that the Society could go round the Village and identify where it would be valuable for trees to be planted. As the Council has an Initiative on Trees, they might be able to make a financial contribution. SF pointed out that any tree planting would require the commitment of owners of the land, as they would have to look after the tree.

AC suggested further discussion of the wider issue of Oxton's treescape at the next meeting.

Action: AC

7. Planning report

SW circulated an updated report. This included details of an application to the Council for new use of premises at 53 Christchurch Road; the application had not included a Heritage Statement and had ignored other relevant planning issues. However, it now appears that the application will not now go ahead.

8. Village Centre

Tranmere mural

The Council is awaiting a response from the Home Cafe owner regarding planning consent for the mural. AB said that the Planning Enforcement Team would take into account arguments about the consistency of policy on permanent advertising displays. There was some discussion on how the mural might be adequately erased, if this was a result of enforcement.

CCTV

AB reported that the matched-funding proposal for CCTV in the Village could be more complicated than originally believed. He suggested that the Society might be called upon to contribute more than the originally proposed £500 in light of other contributions the Council has made to Society-supported projects. Further discussion of this will be necessary.

Action: AC/GR

Bank Site/The Willows

The owner Christian Hercules has been contacted with queries about the delay in providing services to the building but has not responded.

Ashton House

AB reported that the site has been bought by David Pluck Investments. The developer is aware of the need to maintain the sandstone walls but work undertaken by the Health Trust so far has been inadequate. AC will meet the Council's Planning Officer this week to discuss contacting the

developer. It was pointed out that the Council should have provided more detailed planning guidelines before the sale took place.

9. Secret Gardens

The Chair expressed regret that no representative of the co-ordinators of Secret Gardens was present. She will ask them to attend the next meeting, although that will be very close to the event.

There was discussion about the possibility of the event being cancelled due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) epidemic and whether or not the Society's insurance would cover the costs if that had to happen. SF will check this with Ralph Ingram.

Action: SF

10. Newsletter and website surveys

The results of surveys of the membership on the website and newsletter were circulated. CWe was thanked for the excellent report and CWe for designing the newsletter survey with input from CWa.

CWa said that the newsletter survey showed that the newsletter remained generally popular and that suggestions had been received for new articles on, for example, local wildlife and history of local houses. It was noted that social media was not considered popular even although the survey had been completed online. Some ideas would be taken forward in a re-styling of the newsletter.

JW commented on the number of visits made to the main website and the history pages. These remained fairly constant at about 40 per day.

There was discussion of the change of the Facebook page to 'members-only'. AC said that this had led to some new members of the Society. He added that the new page set up by CWa (Only in Oxtou) was turning out to be very useful and that the Society would work towards there being better connections between the two sites.

11. Other business

The Society noticeboard needs repair after the recent storms. JB will chase up the repair job.

Action: JB

12. Date of next meeting

As the first Tuesday of May may correspond to an important sports fixture, the date of 27th April will be retained as a contingency. Members will be informed.

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.