

## **Minutes of Oxton Society Executive Committee held 1st September 2020 at 17:00, online via ZOOM**

### **Present:**

Rhiannon Evans (RE) (Chair)  
Jeff Willis (JW) (Vice-Chair)  
Alan Chape (AC) (Secretary)  
Griff Round (GR) (Treasurer)  
John Booth (JB) (Hanging baskets)  
Bob Knowles (BK) (History Group)  
Cllr Allan Brame (AB)  
Steve Ferguson (SF)  
John Heathman (JH)  
Carla Walker (CWA)  
George Harrison (GH) (Tree Group)  
Dominic Wilkinson (DW)  
Don Firth-Williamson (DFW)  
Dave Barden (DB) (Membership Secretary)  
Graham McLean (GMCL) (Acting Minutes Secretary)

### **Apologies:**

Patrick Toosey (PT)  
Carolyn Weber (CW)  
Steve Weber (SW)  
Annette Capper (ACa)  
Heather Atkins (HA)  
Chris Jarrey (CJ)

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

### **2. Matters arising**

#### **● *Implications of new planning regulations***

AC explained some aspects of the Government's proposed changes to planning rules. The 12-week consultation period will end on 1st October 2020 and the Society will respond by contributing to the response to be submitted by Civic Voice. AC will circulate our proposed contribution to members of the Executive Committee.

The new system will go live as soon as the Local Authority's local plan is approved. After this there will be very little opportunity to comment on planning proposal outside this local plan, which will generally favour approval of applications as long as they conform with the new regulations.

AB referred to the three new categories of land allocated for building: Growth areas, Renewal areas and Green Belt, or areas of outstanding natural beauty. The conditions to be applied to approval of applications to build will differ between the three areas. He suggested that there is already resistance to this designation within Government, particularly from Tory Shire members. JW commented that, once the LA local plan is approved, there will be an opportunity to comment on how the three designated areas are defined on Wirral.

DW questioned if there was any further guidance on the Design Codes that will be published alongside the regulations. AC said that Design Codes will be national (England) and can only be modified

marginally by Local Authorities, ostensibly to reflect local architectural features. Local Authorities will have to appoint officers to deal specifically with that issue.

AC will convene a meeting of the Planning Group to contribute to the survey being circulated by Civic Voice to inform their response to the consultation. JW said that DW's contribution to comments on the Design Code will be invaluable.

**Action: AC**

● **Annual Report**

RE presented the proposed final version of the Society's Annual Report. This was approved in its current form. JW will email members after 13th September to alert them to its availability on the website. There was a question about members who do not have access to the website and further discussion led to the agreement that the report should also be printed and circulated at the same time as the next Newsletter in November, when the back copies of the History Periodical could also be printed and included. BK said that, if there was any problem with there being enough people available to deliver these large bundles, then members of the History Group — and possibly other members of the Executive Committee — would be willing to help. SF will confirm those arrangements as soon as possible.

**Action: SF/BK**

● **Design Award and other awards**

JW stated that nominations for the Design Award had now closed and that four nominations had been received. SW will convene the Design Award panel in October to reach a decision.

RE reminded the Committee of previous recipients of awards and of the current three criteria for making Outstanding and Lifetime Awards and asked for approval of a change of wording and of a further category of award as follows:

1. *A substantial contribution to the work of the Society by an individual who was not on the executive committee (including co-optees) or, was leaving it.*
2. *A recognition of long service to the committee. We accepted the definition of 20 years as 'long service' and recognised this might include someone still serving on the committee.*
3. *Recognition of significant contributions by village businesses to the Society's activity and /or Oxton Village .*
4. *Special Awards. Awarded to businesses or individuals who have made a significant contribution in special circumstances e. g. the Coronavirus pandemic.*

These were all approved.

**5. Group reports**

i) *Finance*

GB commented that very little had been spent since the last meeting, although some items of expenditure are expected soon, e.g. Christmas Lights and the expenditure on the Bank Site.

ii) *Membership*

Notes of a meeting held to review joining and renewal arrangements were circulated. The main features of the proposal are:

- In future the normal and preferred form of paying will be Standing Order (SO).
- Bank transfer (BACS) will be discontinued for the 30 or so who use this method.

- Payment for multiple years will be discontinued.
- We will retain the option of annual payment by cheque/cash by hand or post, but only for those who strongly object to SO and only for single year.
- All new joiners will be invited to pay by SO, both on the website and by issuing join forms at events, etc. As at present, country members will receive newsletters by email.
- (We probably need a new publicity leaflet, with SO mandate etc, to help with recruitment.)
- As and when members come up for renewal they will get a renewal letter and SO mandate. It will say that SO is the new normal and:
  - Invites them to go online to renew their membership and set up regular transfer, ie SO, using internet banking, OR
  - Invites them to post the SO mandate to their bank, OR
  - Offers the possibility of payment by cheque/cash, if they must.
- Online renewal will be similar but with tick boxes to notify us which method they have chosen.
- We hope and expect that most people will renew by “regular transfer/SO” as multi-year memberships play out.
- Gift Aid will continue as existing for both renewals and new joiners whichever method they use.

DB commented that the proposed arrangements could lead to an increase in donations. Some hiccups might be anticipated; so the current arrangements will continue alongside for a further year. Membership cards will continue to be issued along with confirmatory emails. The new system would come into force in February 2021 and should therefore be publicised in the November newsletter. There will be a need to purchase some website support to allow membership payments to be made that way. A new membership leaflet will also be produced and CWa agreed to be involved in its drafting.

**Action: JW/DB/CWa**

All the above proposals were agreed, subject to the website support costing a reasonable amount, to be approved by GR. It was accepted that there are no implications for the Society’s constitution. A new membership drive will be instigated fairly soon.

### iii) *Friends of the Arno*

ACa was thanked for her previously circulated report, which was accepted.

### iv) *History Group*

BK demonstrated the new Blue Plaque to the Willmer sisters. He and Jo Hipps had recently visited the owners of the house to host the plaque to discuss its position. JW and JB will be responsible for affixing it. There will be only a small number of people able to attend the ceremony in person, but it will either be recorded or be available live online. Members of the Committee were asked to signify by email to BK and RE if they wish to attend.

**Action: all**

The accompanying booklet on the sisters, written by Jo Hipps, is currently being printed. As the Oxton Bookshop, where it would normally be sold, is not open at present, BK suggested that it might be

possible to sell it via the website and distributed to purchasers by members of the History Group; the same could apply to all the history publications.

JW asked about progress of the digitising project. BK replied that he will having a meeting this week with the person appointed to carry out the work.

*v) Tree Group*

GH was thanked for his previously circulated report. In response to a question about the tree at the Bank Site, he said that crown raising of that tree would be acceptable. Mike Hercules, the landlord of the property on the site, approves of the work being done.

In response to a question about the development of a 'Tree Strategy' for the Society, GH said that he thought the Tree Group was not the best group to develop this. AC asked that the Tree Group consider the Council's Tree Strategy and that of other organisations to see if they could be adapted.

**Action: GH**

With regard to tree planting, SF said that the Society is still waiting for a bill from Port Sunlight for the planting that was done in February. He said that the Society is now able to respond to requests for assistance from the Tree Fund; GR confirmed that £1000 will be available.

*vi) Planning Group*

The circulated planning report was accepted with thanks. AB noted that there has been a flurry of very recent applications that were not in this report.

## **6. Membership renewals**

See 5ii) above.

## **7. Ben Harrison meeting**

RE informed the Committee that the proposed meeting with Ben Harrison is regrettably postponed as a result of Ben's ill-health. A card has been sent from the Society.

## **8. Meeting with Mike Hercules**

AC reported on a meeting with Mike Hercules. Mike Hercules agreed to provide electricity from the landlord's premises on the site if the Society pays for the cabling between the meter and the defibrillator (approx. cost £100). It is hoped that this can be sorted within a reasonable time scale.

It was noted that there are still some other problems on the site. For example the paving and landscaping of the area in front of the building, the slope of that area, the position of seating and of the Oxtan Society notice board. It was suggested that the notice board could be refurbished rather than completely replaced. SF noted the need to protect the tree on the site when the paving is being installed (see 5 v) above) and will meet AC to look at this issue.

AC noted that all correspondence with Mr Hercules is recorded in writing.

## **9. Character properties and walls working group**

JW has undertaken a data survey and members of the Planning Group will undertake a more detailed survey on selected streets.

## **10. Proposed joint calendar with Friends of the Arno**

AC reported on a meeting with Jim Poynton to discuss costs of the project. Because of the inevitable delay in making the necessary arrangements and the risk of making a financial loss, it was agreed that the Calendar Group should consider options including postponing it until 2022 and that only 500 copies then be produced.

## **11. 40-year anniversary booklet**

AC reported that Phill Jenkins is no longer able to undertake the graphic work on the booklet. AC has met Jim Poynton of Impressions printers to discuss the cost of his taking on some of this work, as 'Design and Print'. The design work will be undertaken in Apple Pages software and 1000 copies will be ordered. Once printed it could be circulated to all members along with the Newsletter, possibly in an addressed envelope.

## **12. Willmer sisters Blue Plaque**

See 3 iv) above.

## **13. Tree Strategy**

See 3 v) above

## **14. Newsletter**

CWa requested agreement that the next newsletter would be printed, as distinct from the two most recent ones that were in digital form only. RE noted the problem that still exists about editors meeting face-to-face to undertake the editing and design. CWa still does not have access to Apple software that is used for either digital or print versions, and thanked GMcL for an offer to help with the production of future editions.

## **15. Other business**

a) JB said that he will continue for one more year to organise the Hanging Baskets in the Village. He will no longer be installing the large baskets but will only put up the smaller ones, adding a further two to the total. A change in the watering system may be required. This should be on the agenda the November Executive Committee meeting.

**Action: AC**

b) JH reported that he now has responsibility for Christmas Lights. The expected cost will be around £1500 for the street lights and £670 for lights for the Christmas tree to be erected in the Village. It was noted that the previous vandalised tree has now been removed and that JB will organise for a holder to be put in place for the new one. Both Greens and Elixir have volunteered to be involved in raising money from the community for the lights and the tree, as this year there is no Secret Gardens revenue to use. AB said that the Local Authority's Community Fund will contribute £500.

DFW commented that Village businesses, other than the two mentioned above, do not normally contribute money for the lights but instead give vouchers or items for a raffle, but that it is unlikely that it will be possible to organise a raffle this year. DFW will liaise with JW on how businesses may otherwise get involved.

**Action: DFW/JW**

c) SF asked if a date is available for Secret Gardens in 2021 as it is time to start recruiting garden owners. GR said that the matter will be discussed at the next Officers' meeting.

**Action: officers**

d) AC mentioned the recent proposed Government legislation on pavement parking. AB said that there is a national consultation going on, to be completed by 3rd November.

e) RE asked about the format for future Executive Committee meetings: online or face-to-face. There was a slight majority in favour of returning to face-to-face, although it was recognised that this would remain difficult with social distancing still in place. AC will speak to St. Saviour's Church about the use of the large hall rather than the normal meeting room but with Zoom available for those who do not want to meet in person.

CJ asked that any future meeting should not start as early as 5 pm as he is unable to attend at that time.

#### **16. Date of next meeting**

The Chair thanked AB for hosting the current meeting online and GMCL for producing the minutes.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 3rd November 2020; location and time to be decided.

The meeting closed at 18:20.