

THE KNOWLE SOCIETY
(A company limited by guarantee)

**Minutes of the 50th Annual General Meeting of The Knowle Society held on
Monday 18th February 2013, in the Village Hall commencing at 8 pm.**

1. Welcome

Leighton Jones Chairman opened the 50th Annual General Meeting of The Knowle Society (the Society). He thanked members for coming this evening. He reminded the meeting that only members are entitled to be present at the first part of the meeting, which is the formal AGM. Leighton Jones went on to say that after the formal part of the meeting is concluded there would be a break for coffee and biscuits. The meeting will then reconvene to hear the Reports from the Trustee Directors with an opportunity to ask questions about what the Society is doing and to make any general points.

Leighton Jones reminded members that there is an item on the AGM agenda where any member can make a proposal for the AGM to pass a resolution dealing with the formal business of the Society, providing it is seconded. Leighton Jones then asked the meeting if there were any proposals.

There were no proposals from members present.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from June Vaughan, Geoff and Margaret Aitchison, Mary Vince, John Moise, Rita Brook, Mary Riley and Sheila Emsden.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

Proposal: that the Minutes of the AGM held on 20th February 2012 are signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Proposed by Phil Vince and seconded by Colin Burley.

The vote in favour of approving the Minutes of the AGM held on 20th February 2012 was unanimous.

The Minutes of the AGM 20th February 2012 were signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Report

A copy of the formal Report of the Trustee Directors is attached to the Minutes.

Leighton Jones informed the meeting that extracts from the formal Reports of the Trustee Directors were published in the January Newsletter and copies of the full Reports were available this evening.

Leighton Jones said that this past year had again been a very active year for the Society and all those involved in running it have been very busy. As well as running the usual meetings and walks for members; dealing with planning applications and, particularly, the Solihull Local Plan; running the History Centre; representing members on groups like the Airport Consultative Committee and Solihull Council Neighbourhood Group; 2012 was also the Jubilee year, both Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee and the Society's Golden Jubilee.

He went on to say that the Jubilees were celebrated with the BBC 'Any Questions' in February; a Society tea party in May; the Village celebrations on the June Weekend; and the planting of a tree in St John's Close. Trustee Directors (TDs) produced a booklet containing memories of the first 50 years of the Society, which was issued to every member.

Leighton Jones then drew member's attention to a number of projects currently being undertaken. He said that it has been seven years since the Society became a Company Limited by Guarantee with a new set of Governance documents. TDs had been looking at them to see whether the documents needed updating to ensure the Society can continue to operate in the best interests of Knowle. This work is on-going, but it is probable that member's views will be sought on possible changes later in the year. With regards to the project to preserve the line of the by-pass as open ground, Leighton Jones informed members that this matter would be discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

He went on to say that TDs have also been in consultation with the Council over the proposals for changes to car parking in Knowle. Further information will be given during the TDs Reports section of the meeting.

Leighton Jones then reported the changes in roles amongst the TDs:

- Lilla Baker is taking over from John Rowley as Chairman of the Community Services Committee, although John Rowley will continue as a TD and represent the Society on the Airport Environment Monitoring Working Group. Leighton Jones thanked John Rowley for all he had done since taking on the role in 2006. [Lilla will represent us on the Airport Consultative Committee.]
- Dave Pinwell is taking over as Editor of the Newsletter from David Bower, who will continue to look after the website and provide IT support for the membership database. Leighton Jones said that David Bower has carried out considerable upgrading to the database this year and he deserves our thanks for this and for the years during which he produced the Newsletter so well.

Leighton Jones went on to say that there are many others who deserve thanks; our Councillors, who are always supportive; the members of the Committees, who do a lot of the hard work in keeping the Society going; the library volunteers; the distributors and all those who play a role however small to help the Society.

Leighton Jones informed the meeting that three Trustee Directors will be standing down at the end of this meeting. He expressed his appreciation of the work that they have done during the time they've been on the Board:

- Anne Smith has been a Trustee Director since 2007 and in recent years had been responsible for the distribution of the Newsletters, including organising the distributors and putting up the bulk batches of Newsletters for others to pass on to the Distributors. This is one of those jobs that is invisible, but without which the Society would not work. Leighton Jones said that he is very glad that she had agreed to carry on with this role. Leighton Jones presented Anne Smith with a small token of thanks for her work on behalf of the Society. Everyone who works for the Society does so as a volunteer and most put quite a lot of their time and effort into it.
- Ian Simmonds joined the Trustee Directors in 2009 and promptly took over the Natural Environment Committee. Besides working on a number of long-term plans for improvements in the 'green' areas of the village his Committee succeeded in improving the area around the Wychwood roundabout, clearing dead trees and opening up the area. The Committee launched a project to increase the number of trees in and around the village. (Knowle is recognised as having a below average area of trees) and a project to preserve the by-pass route as a green corridor through the village. Leighton Jones presented Ian Simmonds with a small token of thanks for his work on behalf of the Society.

- Liz Linker has been Honorary Secretary for only a year, but the impact she has made has been considerable. Leighton Jones expressed his personal thanks for the way Liz Linker had supported him during his first year as Chairman. He felt sure that things would not have run as smoothly without her support. He said that Liz Linker had really thrown herself into supporting the Society and had taken on far more than she needed to. He expressed regret that she had decided to step down, due to her plans for extensive travel in the coming year but he quite understood her reasons for doing so. Leighton Jones presented Liz Linker with a small token of thanks for her work on behalf of the Society.

Leighton Jones reminded the meeting that the Society is run by volunteers. More people are always needed; people who are willing to spare some time and contribute their skills. Volunteers are needed on several of the Committees; and there is a vacancy for the Chairmanship of the Natural Environment Committee and vacancies for TDs without portfolio. This was an excellent opportunity to get involved with the work of the Society. Leighton Jones said that he was happy to talk to anyone who might be interested.

5. Treasurer's Report

David Watson presented the shortened version of the Annual Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2012. A copy attached to the Agenda had been handed to all members present. Copies of the full set of Accounts were available on request.

David Watson informed the meeting that he was pleased to report a busy and successful year for the Society. Both income and expenditure was well in excess of the previous year, partly due to the Society's involvement in the two jubilee celebrations, and the Waitrose application.

A historic booklet, celebrating the society's 50th anniversary was printed for distribution to members free of charge. This accounted for quite a large area of expenditure for the society's 50th jubilee. The Society also produced a celebratory calendar, which sold very well, with the profit being donated to the Stroke Association. The effect on the year's accounts of the calendar was cost neutral.

David Watson drew members' attention to the Balance Sheet. The cash balance at the start of the year was £12,977, and ended the year at £11,073. This represents a reduction in the cash balance of £1,904.

He said that the Society has a Reserves Policy that aims to keep a balance sufficient to cover one year's normal expenditure. This year, the expenditure exceeded the reserves due to the exceptional items.

David Watson then turned to the Income Statement. He pointed out that Income increased by £4,342 from £10,535 to £14,877. However, he said that £1,873 was income from sales of the calendar, guides and DVDs. and a corresponding expense of £1,825 appears as an exceptional item for the printing costs of the calendars. As the two items almost cancel each other out, and were specific to the Jubilee, the true increase in income from the previous year would be £2,469.

David Watson went on to say that much of this increase could be attributed to the increase in membership and efficient claiming of tax credits from gift aid. The gift aid tax recovery was almost £1,000 greater than the previous year due to the hard work of the Membership Secretary.

David Watson then moved on to the Expenditure Statement. He reported that this year was also busy with various social events. The costs have risen year on year, partly

due to the increases in the fees charged by the speakers at the Society meetings. The figures also include the refunds made to the members who purchased advance tickets for the Compton Verney visit, which unfortunately had to be cancelled.

The £504 of 'Other Costs' is split between £247 advertising and publicity costs, and £257 for the costs of the society guides.

In terms of the Jubilee costs, David Watson said that the Society spent a total of £2,300 in two areas. The first was the tea party held in celebration of the Society's 50th anniversary costing £721, and secondly the cost of printing the celebratory history booklet at a cost of £1,579. He said that the Society was also involved in the street celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee at a cost of £125.

The Waitrose application also involved the Society in exceptional costs this year, with £685 being spent on professional advice fees, and the remainder on stationery and printing costs associated with meetings regarding the planned development.

David Watson reported that Total Expenditure is shown on the Summary as £18284 of which £1,245 is depreciation of fixed assets. He said that in trying to look at the Society's normal pattern of spending, he had taken out the exceptional income, expenditure and depreciation figures to arrive at figures indicative of the Society's normal activity for the year. David Watson said that if you remove the exceptional cost items of the history booklet, Waitrose costs, and Jubilee expenses and depreciation, this leaves "normal" cash expenditure of £13,331 for the year. Similarly, the "normal" income for the year with exceptional income from the calendars removed would be £13,004, showing a normal profit & loss figure of a £327 loss for the year.

With regards to Subscriptions, David Watson said that in making the decision on subscription level, the Society keeps a close eye on income and expenditure. He said that at present, the TDs did not feel it was necessary to recommend any increase in subscription level for the next financial year, but in view of generally rising costs, and the Society's policy of keeping sufficient reserves, he said that the Society will be reviewing whether a subscription increase will be needed in the near future.

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner

David Watson informed the meeting that he was recommending that the Knowledge-based firm of West & Co continue to act as the Society's Independent Examiner and that their office can remain as the Society's Registered Office. He reported that their services would be as before, and includes their check of the year's accounts and signing them off.

Proposal: that West & Co is appointed to act as the Society's Independent Examiners.

Proposed by David Watson, seconded by Phil Vince

The members unanimously agreed with the Proposal with no abstentions.

Resolved: that West & Co is appointed to act as The Knowle Society's Independent Examiners

7. Election of Chairman for the ensuing year

The President Peter Ellis took over as temporary Chairman for this item. He reminded the meeting that Officers are appointed on an annual basis. Peter Ellis commended Leighton Jones in his first year as Chairman of the Society for his hard work in what had been a difficult and challenging year.

Peter Ellis informed the meeting that there was one nomination for the position of Chairman. Leighton Jones was proposed by Peter Johnson seconded by Janet Erzen. There were no further nominations received from the floor.

The voting in favour of the appointment of Leighton Jones as Chairman of the Society was unanimous with no abstentions.

Leighton Jones was duly appointed as Chairman of The Knowle Society.

Peter Ellis handed the meeting back to Leighton Jones.

8. Election of Officers for the ensuing year

Deputy Chairman

Leighton Jones informed the meeting that there had been one nomination for the position of Deputy Chairman.

Bill Bohanna was proposed by David Watson and seconded by Peter Johnson.

As there were no further nominations Bill Bohanna was elected Deputy Chairman.

Honorary Secretary

Leighton Jones informed the meeting that there had been one nomination for the position of Honorary Secretary. Janet Royle was proposed by Leighton Jones and seconded by Andrew Marston. As there were no further nominations Janet Royle was elected Honorary Secretary.

Post Meeting Note: Janet Royle was unable to take up the role of Honorary Secretary.

Honorary Treasurer

Leighton Jones informed the meeting that there had been one nomination for Honorary Treasurer. David Watson was proposed by Peter Johnson and seconded by Peter Ewin. As there were no further nominations David Watson was duly elected as Honorary Treasurer.

9. Election of Trustee Directors

Leighton Jones informed the meeting that in accord with the Constitution there would normally be four vacancies for TDs. Two vacancies had been created by the resignations of Ian Simmonds and Anne Smith and two by the resignations, in line with the rules, of the two longest serving TDs: David Bower and Janet Erzen. Leighton Jones reported that David Bower and Janet Erzen had both expressed their willingness to stand for re-election. He said that they had both been nominated and seconded. Leighton Jones then informed the meeting that there were three vacancies remaining. He asked if there was any member willing to stand. He went on to say that if anyone was interested and would like to know more about what is involved, he would be happy to talk to them after the meeting or at any later time.

Leighton Jones then moved on to the re-elections:

David Bower had been proposed by Martin Warr and seconded by Janet Erzen. There were no further nominations received from the floor.

The voting in favour of the re-election of David Bower was unanimous with no abstentions.

David Bower was duly re-elected as a TD.

Janet Erzen had been proposed by Leighton Jones and seconded by Liz Linker. There were no further nominations received from the floor.

The voting in favour of the re-election of Janet Erzen was unanimous with no abstentions.

Janet Erzen was duly re-elected as a TD.

10. Members proposed Resolutions.

There were no members resolutions proposed.

11. Any Other Business

Leighton Jones reminded the meeting that this item is only to deal with formal matters concerning the Society; he said that there was an opportunity for general questions and discussion later.

Leighton Jones then paid tribute to Gary Masters and Dr Peter Morton.

The Tributes are recorded in full below:

Tribute to Gary Masters.

‘This is a sad item to deal with. Most of you will know that Gary Masters has died after a very long period of increasing ill health that he bore with remarkable fortitude. In recent months his health had deteriorated rapidly and he was undergoing regular dialysis, on top of his other health problems. In the end it seems that his body was just not able to keep fighting on.

Gary had always been a fighter and was always ready to stand out, never being reluctant to say what he really thought and, in the process, making the rest of us test our views of the item in question.

He was always a very good servant of the Society, first getting actively involved in late 1996, having retired early due to ill health. He almost instantly became a member of what was then called the ‘Amenities’ committee, now renamed as ‘Community Services’ as well as of the Executive Committee. He soon started his rise through the ranks, becoming Chairman of the ‘Amenities’ committee in 1998, taking over from Peter Morton. Despite a period of ill health he remained in this post until 2006 when he became Chairman of the Society, a position he held for two years, until his increasing ill health meant that he felt he could not do justice to the post.

Even then he didn’t let go, staying as a Trustee Director for another 4 years, getting involved in all sorts of additional activities, such as the Christmas tree arrangements, participation in the Festival in the Park and other one-off events. He was never one to sit quietly.

In his time with the Society he saw and contributed too many changes. When he started we had 1447 members, now there are well over 3000 as you’ve heard; the Society’s funds rising from £3,600 a year to £10,000. The activities of the Society also increased over that period. There were also changes in the organisation, which he very much contributed to. In 2003 he was one of the people who decided that the Society needed to take advantage of a training programme run by the Civic Trust for members who might become future leaders. I don’t know why, but I was one of the three who were sent on the training programme. I hope I’ve repaid his faith in me, I think that remains to be seen, but I’ll always be grateful to him for that.

He was also one of those who realised that the Society needed to change its structure and become, not just a charity, but also a company limited by guarantee to give us more certainty over the financial stability of the Society, a very significant change.

At the meeting of the Trustee Directors in November we decided to award Gary honorary membership of the Society. He was very pleased to be recognised in this way and it is a very great pity that he could not be with us tonight to enjoy the greetings of you all.

To mark our appreciation of everything Gary gave and meant to the Society I would like to present this certificate to Gwen and family with our love and best wishes.’

Tribute to Peter Morton.

‘Peter Morton has made a remarkable contribution to the Society over such a long period that I doubt that anyone will ever get anywhere near repeating it.

Peter’s active involvement in the Society began way back in our Silver Jubilee year of 1987 when he joined the Amenities committee and was promptly made Chairman of the committee and a member of the Society’s Executive Committee. He served in both roles for many years, eventually relinquishing the chair of the committee to Gary Masters in 1998, although staying on the Executive Committee until 2007, a remarkable 20 years.

He soon transferred allegiance to the Planning Committee, serving on that until his recent retirement, by which time he had been actively involved with the Society’s activities for an amazing 25 years. We really should have celebrated Peter’s Silver Jubilee last year alongside our Golden Jubilee.

As I’ve only known Peter for a relatively short period I asked a few who would have known him for longer.

Peter Ewin’s comments were: -

‘From when I joined the committee, I had the impression of a fine intellect and Peter always was ready to take a point of view that quite often conflicted with the opinions of others but which invariably led to our final committee view being better balanced. Every committee needs a Peter Morton!’

Colin Smith described similar qualities: -

‘An outstanding feature of Peter's work in committee was his sharp mind. Peter did not attempt to dominate discussions but when he spoke, everyone listened because his comments were always perceptive and incisive. His contribution often persuaded the other committee members, but if he was unsuccessful, he accepted the majority opinion and supported the outcome.

He was generous in his praise of a job well done. This was often done privately. He would take the officer aside and offer his congratulations.’

My first real involvement with Peter Morton was when Peter Ewin inveigled me into becoming Chairman of the Planning Committee, despite my knowing nothing about planning. If it hadn’t been for the help of the committee members, especially Peter’s vast knowledge of planning and everything related that had happened in Knowle in the previous decades, I’d have really floundered. His passion for the good of Knowle came over very clearly. He might not have been the most talkative member of the committee, but I soon learnt to listen when he did speak.

In recognition of what Peter has done for the Society and Knowle over a magnificent 25 years, I am very pleased to present him with this certificate to record the award of Life Membership of the Society with our thanks’

The formal business meeting closed at 8.46 pm

Signed..... Chairman Dated.....