

THE KNOWLE SOCIETY

(A company limited by guarantee)

Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting of The Society in the 59th year of The Society Saturday 26th February 2022 in Knowle Village Hall

Trustee Directors Present:

Apologies:

Andrew Marston, Chairman	
David Bower, Deputy Chairman	
David Watson, Treasurer	
Maria Brown, Secretary	
Gavin Allan	David Fraley
Lilla Baker	Alistair Innes
Angela Bird	
Janet Erzen	
Leighton Jones	
David Pinwell	
Martin Warr	
Members Present: 46 members of Knowle Society	Chris Adderley, Georgina Asbury, Keith & Shirley Barrett, Joy Crumpler, Margaret Plant
Speaker: Ian Harvey of Civic Voice, with Sara James & Linda Brown in attendance	

1	Welcome and Apologies for absence: Andrew Marston as Chairman welcomed some 46 members and guests to the meeting, thanked all for their attendance and took the above apologies.
2	Minutes of the AGM held 22nd February 2020 were proposed by Phil Vince, seconded by Peter Ewin and approved.
3	<p>Chairman's Report: Andrew Marston referred to the slight drop in membership numbers but was happy to report on progress made in some fields, despite Covid, and it was hoped to get back on track shortly. He thanked Janet Erzen for her time as a Trustee Director and her dedication in chairing the History Group over many years – over which time a lot of things had happened and many exhibitions had been put on and enjoyed. A vote of thanks was led by Andrew Marston and she was awarded life membership of The Society, with a presentation certificate and flowers. Peter Ewin as President and present co-Chairman of the Local History group, echoed and supported the thanks, recognising that Janet had brought her enthusiasm, humour and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Village. He was delighted that she would be staying on as consultant to the Local History group, which now consisted of seven members.</p> <p>Andrew Marston then made a presentation to Maria Brown as Secretary for her support during his term of office as Chairman and for which he was most grateful.</p>
4	<p>Treasurer's Report</p> <p>David Watson presented the accounts for the year ending 30th September 2021 and referred to the full set of accounts available in hard copy and on the website.</p> <p>Income: 3 main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Riley estate: £58,000 in all, which would be set aside as restricted funds for future projects yet to be decided. • Love Knowle Park Project • Various donations and uplift from Gift Aid • General Fund: decline of income over three years, largely due to Covid effect – with subscription

	<p>income now catching up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure also down – with cancellation of such events as lighting-up ceremony • Increase in donations and subscriptions – with large single donation to Knowle Dorridge and Bentley Heath Forum • Breakdown of project expenditure outside general fund: Knowle Park Project almost matches income for the year, with less activity from other projects due to social restrictions • Balance sheet: total equity of £83,699 – with approximately £86,000 in bank and savings accounts, with just over £2,500 owing – this was broken down into notional funds - £20,000 to general, £45,000 in legacy fund and £10,000 in Knowle Park fund <p>In conclusion, donations would always be welcome – either via website or in person. The Society was very fortunate in receipt of the Mary Riley legacy, which would benefit the village as a whole with future projects.</p> <p>The adoption of the Treasurer’s Report and Accounts was proposed by Phil Vince and seconded by Peter Ewin.</p>
5	<p>Appointment of Independent Examiner West – Chartered Accountants were proposed by Sue Marston, seconded by Bill Bohanna, and agreed.</p>
6	<p>Election of Officers Peter Ewin as President of The Society took the Chair for this item and the following Officers were duly elected:</p> <p>Chairman: David Bower (nominated by Andrew Marston seconded by David Fraley)</p> <p>Deputy Chairman: David Fraley (nominated by Rachel Marston, seconded by David Watson)</p> <p>Secretary: Maria Brown (nominated by David Fraley, seconded by Elizabeth Baker)</p> <p>Treasurer: David Watson (nominated by Rachel Marston, seconded by Angela Bird)</p> <p>At this point, Andrew Marston, as outgoing Chairman, was presented with a card and gift from his fellow Trustee Directors and Peter Ewin led a vote of thanks for his term of office as a first-class Chair.</p> <p>Election of Trustee Directors: The following Trustee Directors were elected for a 3-year term of office:</p> <p>Bill Bohanna (nominated by Juliet Deane, seconded by Martin Murphy) Alistair Innes (nominated by David Fraley, seconded by Leighton Jones) Andrew Marston (nominated by Leighton Jones, seconded by David Fraley) David Pinwell (nominated by Angela Bird, seconded by David Bower)</p> <p>Gavin Allan, Rachel Marston, Angela Bird, Elizabeth Baker and Martin Warr remained as Trustee Directors, not due for re-election as yet.</p> <p>The retirement of Janet Erzen as Trustee Director was marked with thanks and a presentation for her long and sterling service to The Society and the Local History Group in particular.</p>
	<p>At this point, David Bower as incoming Chairman took over the Chair and opened to the floor for any issues to be raised.</p>
7	<p>Any Other Business a. Bill Bohanna referred to the rugby and asked that due note would be taken of such events</p>

	<p>when planning for future meetings.</p> <p>b. There was a request for speakers to use microphones or project their voices in order to be heard. This would be noted.</p> <p>In drawing the meeting to a close, David Bower urged attendees to talk to Trustee Directors over the tea break and feel able to raise any questions they had. His wish for an interactive Society and ownership by its membership would be key for its future credibility and he wished to encourage a wider conversation to which all members could contribute and feel a part.</p>
	<p>That concluded the formal business of the AGM at 3.23 p.m. and there followed a refreshment interval before Mr Ian Harvey, founding director of Civic Voice was introduced. A vote of thanks was given to Angela Bird and her team for provision of tea and cake.</p>
	<p>Civic Voice is the national charity for civic societies, providing the interface between societies and instruments of government and for which service local societies (of which Knowle is the largest in membership) pay an annual subscription of £500.</p> <p>Ian presented the history of the civic society movement, with Sid Vale as the first Society formed and still going strong. The movement is older than the National Trust. It was set up by Duncan Sandys who set up the former Civic Trust, formed in 1957, which led to the Civil Amenities Act and legislation constructed around Conservation Areas. Civic Voice was founded in 2020, with 700 community groups making a difference in their local areas. In 2019 civic societies were named in government guidance as groups to be consulted; this recommendation had not existed before. In 2022 the world changed, covid struck and guidance updated.</p> <p>Today there are 100,000 plus members who care about where we live and come together. The smallest society has six members – Knowle is one of three largest societies – average membership being 300, with a variety of subscriptions from 50p to £30.</p> <p>Ian was pleased to be here in person at the first public meeting he had attended for two years.</p> <p>Looking at the future of civic societies – with online meetings made possible, attracting more people – there were some benefits from Covid - although 40% of societies had lost members recently.</p> <p>Questions for Societies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do we go from here? • How to attract more volunteers, how to bring in younger members and where do such societies fit in with other organisations and with government policy etc. <p>Civic Voice can provide 1:1 support – to look at the future – as the world is changing and where do we fit in within that change.</p> <p>High Street policies are being made, but it should not be just government which takes those decisions – local communities should be helping to shape local plans. Some development will not be popular, some change will be necessary but not too much. Response to the Planning White Paper had taken some 12 months to formulate and halted certain elements of change.</p> <p>Reaching out is important – to demonstrate reaching out to the wider community – Civic Voice has been working with Reading University with data to support. It was about the ability to have a meaningful say on planning applications and working behind the scenes, with a responsibility for making change happen but not to be wholly focused on planning. The objective was to demonstrate the value of how communities are involved – in place making and projects as well as planning.</p>

<p>UK prosperity fund – which every local authority can bid for but they need a civic society representative on that group to influence – need that representation.</p> <p>Importance of involvement of membership to ensure growth. The future is positive for the movement – societies need to go on a journey and undertake Civic Voice’s Health Assessment checklist.</p> <p>Encouragement to sign up for National Civic Day – June 18th – to focus on civic pride and pride of place – particularly post-pandemic – similar to flourishing movement in 60s and 70s – Ian wished for Knowle Society to be on the journey with them.</p>
<p>Strategy</p> <p>David Bower then referred to the paper which had been distributed prior to the meeting, with thoughts on focusing on the future for The Society, at this time of 60 years since its being founded, with the need to take stock. The significant legacy would need to be used as appropriate for the objectives of The Society and benefit of the community. He invited those present to think about such aspects as the significant challenges of membership; committee structure and partnership with other groups.</p> <p>Lilla Baker then introduced her “food for thought” paper with its 10-year vision for The Society and what it might be involved in with actions on planning, housing, conservation area – looking forwards – with the importance of infrastructure. She urged those present to think about what housing might look like in ten years’ time. With consultation and discussion paramount, she asked what members thought about what The Society should be doing and asked for ideas. She explained the current collaboration with other groups such as police, airport and transport, community activities that The Society should be part of. Going forwards, The Society needed to consider its structure and whether it was happy with its Objects and asked for any ideas and questions from the floor.</p> <p>Phil Vince posed the question as to whether we should need to consider increased housing inside or outside the Conservation Area and what was the expectation. He felt that the Conservation Area had already absorbed all it could and that it could not really handle more. Conservation Area as opposed to Green Belt – there has to be a limit.</p> <p>How should The Knowle Society be using its own resources? We are a big society and not very representative of the population of Knowle. We need to devise ways of communication and listening. The success of the playground involvement was referred to but how many new members had that produced? Need to capitalise on young parents using the playground and ask for membership. Social media was made good use of for the Playground project.</p> <p>Bill Bohanna felt that communication really needed to be looked at and stepped up. It was not good enough at the moment and The Society did not sell itself well enough. Communication was key to a lot of things.</p> <p>Reference was made to the Newsletter and the Mary Riley legacy.</p> <p>Susan Trucchi asked about schools, youth clubs, church – and whether they could be drawn into our communications about what The Society is doing. She mentioned the telephone kiosk and wondered about how to engage with the young element. To be noted was the fact that The Society facebook page was not visible unless the user is registered – the facebook page of The Society should be a public one for anyone to view.</p> <p>In response to a question about celebrating the Queen’s Jubilee, Valerie Hamley was assured that the History section was leading the planning for an Autumn event and working together with local groups including Visit Knowle so that the celebration would be marked.</p>

	<p>An email address would be set up to receive responses for ideas.</p>
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David Bower thanked all for attending, thanked colleagues from Civic Voice for their attendance and inspiring talk and closed the meeting at 4.56 p.m.