

THE KNOWLE SOCIETY

(A company limited by guarantee)

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting of The Society in its 60th year Saturday 25th February 2023 in Knowle Village Hall

Trustee Directors Present	Apologies
David Bower, Chairman	
David Watson, Treasurer	
Maria Brown, Secretary	
Gavin Allan	David Fraley, Deputy Chairman
Lilla Baker	Martin Warr
Angela Bird	
Alistair Innes	
Leighton Jones	
Andrew Marston	
David Pinwell	
Members Present: 42 members	Jeremy Seel, Margaret Harris, Roger Cook, Martin Murphy, Cllr Diana Holl-Allen

1	Welcome and Apologies for absence: David Bower as Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, thanked everyone for their attendance and took the above apologies.
2	Minutes of the AGM held 22nd February 2022 were approved by the meeting and the updated version would be placed on the website. He noted that the concerns raised at the last AGM had since been addressed and actions followed through – particularly the use of microphone for all speakers at such a meeting.
3	Chairman's Report: In presenting his report, David Bower assured the meeting that the full, signed report and accounts would be on the websites of both the Charity Commission and Companies House in due course, as well as The Society's website. He highlighted the dedication of volunteers as he considered the work of The Society in organising the 60 th Birthday celebration; the introduction of Direct Debit payments to limit the work needed to collect subscriptions. He thanked those who had moved on to this system. Since the last Financial Year, the Financial Policy and Procedures had been extensively reviewed, led by Deputy Chairman, David Fraley. This work had been triggered by the recent loss of £90,000 from Civic Voice, to which The Society is affiliated, due to theft. He reported that The Society had since paid forward their annual subscription, in addition to a donation to support Civic Voice. He paid tribute to his fellow Trustee Directors for the considerable hours that they put in, for the robust discussions and commitment. With regard to governance, he touched on some of the related bodies the Society works with such as the Neighbourhood Forum, Dorridge & District Residents Association (DDRA), Visit Knowle and the new umbrella meeting point (B93 Together) to come together and organise events such as the Platinum Jubilee and the Coronation. He referred to the telephone kiosk and its role of publicity. He noted that, following the amazing bulb planting, a new volunteer would now be needed to reinvigorate the Natural Environment section. He noted that the Local History Committee was busy preparing for its move out of the Library, and was pleased to acknowledge their very amicable working relationship with the Knowle Local History Society. Since its re-opening, the Library had welcomed 911 visitors, adding to the 12,300 visitors overall which represented a major commitment of volunteer hours in the Society's aims of meeting its public benefit obligations. He described the less visible work with the accounts, transport, fundraising, local planning etc which, although not full-time, could be very close; as well as walks and talks which all managed to support a thriving

	<p>community. He expressed his thanks for the dedication and commitment undertaken by The Society's volunteers. In conclusion, he referred to the subscription which he considered very good value for money – and thanked those members present for their support. He also expressed thanks to Angela and her team for the refreshments which would shortly be enjoyed.</p> <p>He noted that a separate report for the History section had been received in addition to the above and which would be held in abeyance for now.</p>
4	<p>Treasurer's Report</p> <p>David Watson presented the accounts for the year ending 30th September 2022 and gave a summary of the overview of income; Income & Expenditure for the General Fund; donations made by the Society; balance sheet; donations made to the Society.</p> <p>Income</p> <p>In describing the overall income figures for the last three years, although member numbers had gradually fallen, the General Fund income had recovered, (due in part to the end of social restrictions).</p> <p>Love Knowle Park: overall income £13,728, with Phase 1 now complete. Overall budget would be £25K, with £12K grant from the Local Authority and £500 from Tesco bags for life scheme.</p> <p>Legacies: £1000 from Stella Jarman; with remainder of £13,178 from Mary Riley legacy, carried over from previous year.</p> <p>Although the overall income of General Fund had not changed by much, member subscriptions had jumped from the previous year due in part to being able to collect the arrears.</p> <p>No income from meetings and social events.</p> <p>Expenditure</p> <p>The Treasurer highlighted the increase in this area due to calendar printing, Christmas expenses and increase in insurance and meeting costs and due to an increase in Public Liability insurance associated with Playground Project.</p> <p>There were also donations to Civic Voice, Knot Garden maintenance, and a doubling of Arden Academy prize fund due to non-event previous year.</p> <p>In summary, increase in expenditure from the General Fund and an increase in reserves, with not much activity on Natural Environment fund which was hoped to be reinvigorated.</p> <p>Balance Sheet</p> <p>The Society reserves stood at £102,179, represented by the bank balances minus amounts owing. The same figure was split between the General Fund of £20,663 and other Nominal Funds which are restricted to specific project spend.</p> <p>The Treasurer was happy to receive Society donations and enumerated the various ways these could be made, including legacies which enabled The Society to invest in more projects. He made the point that the General Fund held a good balance for a year's expenditure.</p> <p>In answer to questions concerning the use of legacy monies, it was clarified that this was currently under discussion, with nothing specific decided as yet. However, there were potentially significant projects in the pipeline to be considered such as the basketball court, the library project and local history digitisation project – all of which would require significant input. There was also a requirement to keep something in reserve for "fighting funds" when situations arose which would require legal advice.</p> <p>Thanks were recorded to the Treasurer for his excellent presentation.</p> <p>The adoption of the Treasurer's Report and Accounts was proposed by David Watson and seconded by Peter Johnson.</p>

5	<p>Appointment of Independent Examiner West – Chartered Accountants were proposed by Andy Moore, seconded by Peter Ewin 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 and Trustee Directors were duly elected:</p> <p>Chairman: David Bower (nominated by David Fraley seconded by David Watson)</p> <p>Deputy Chairman: David Fraley (nominated by David Watson, seconded by Angela Bird)</p> <p>Treasurer: David Watson (nominated by Alistair Innes, seconded by Angela Bird)</p> <p>Secretary: Maria Brown (nominated by David Watson, seconded by David Fraley)</p> <p>Election of Trustee Directors: The following Trustee Directors were duly elected for a 3-year term of office: Angela Bird (nominated by David Fraley, seconded by Maria Brown) Leighton Jones (nominated by Maria Brown, seconded by David Fraley) Elizabeth Baker (nominated by David Fraley, seconded by Alistair Innes) Martin Warr (nominated by David Fraley, seconded by Bill Bohanna)</p> <p>Gavin Allan, Alistair Innes, Andrew Marston and David Pinwell remained as Trustee Directors, not being due for re-election this year.</p>
7	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>7.1. Jenny George expressed her thanks for the use of microphone during this meeting, as she had raised it as an issue at the previous AGM.</p> <p>7.2. Dave Pinwell assured the meeting that the issues of the 30mph speed limit and the state of reduced pavement access due to overhanging hedges on Kenilworth Road/Kixley Lane had been raised with the Local Authority and would be taken forward.</p> <p>7.3. The meeting was assured that the latest changes to the route of the local bus service currently inconveniencing residents being unable to travel into Knowle were being addressed. The Local Authority had objected and Knowle Society and the Dorridge & District Residents Association were working closely in partnership endeavouring to get Transport for West Midlands to improve the service. It was acknowledged that the area needed a reliable and adequately frequent service.</p>
	<p>That concluded the formal business of the AGM.</p>
	<p>Alistair Innes was then invited to present on the Strategy and other items of interest.</p> <p>In response to a questionnaire to ascertain what the future would look like for Knowle, from the small response received (150) the following key themes were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% had lived in the area for more than 20 years • Improvements needed: facilities for children and youth, diverse high street, traffic management • importance of conservation/community/social events • car parking not considered an issue at the moment but would be in the future • use of land/population growth: appropriate housing/minimal land release/higher density or additional/reasonable levels and keeping good spacing between housing • thoughts on Society: hard working / care for community / help and support / best of Knowle and surrounds / talks <p>Adverse feedback on the Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too preoccupied / think they run the place – they don't / elderly, conservative, white / don't always welcome change / old people and bureaucracy / mostly fogies

	<p>Need more of: wider demographics / village social events Need less of: keep doing what you're doing</p> <p>From feedback it was not conclusive but the demographic themes of engaging wider community, young families and couples, membership increase, diversity in leadership stood out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To look at community events for all • Village developments – to continue monitoring – with good developments encouraged <p>With regard to the Basketball Court development, Alistair invited fundraising help – for an even better facility than the Playground – for the youth of the area and surrounding areas – bringing together those in social housing.</p> <p>Helen George, who had been analysing statistics of Knowle over the years, kindly offered to make this information available.</p> <p>In answer to a question of funding for maintenance for these new facilities, the meeting was assured that this was the responsibility of the Local Authority as the subject of an agreement and the initial grant money had been received on that basis.</p> <p>It was clarified that Alistair had been co-opted as a Trustee to the Knowle Society at the outset of the Love Knowle Park project which had been a worthy recipient of legacy contributions among others. The Society provided a governance framework for the fundraising and legal aspects of Love Knowle Park.</p>
	<p>REFRESHMENT INTERVAL – during which tea and cakes were served and for which a vote of thanks was proposed and fully endorsed by the meeting.</p>
	<p>Following the refreshment interval, the second half of the meeting was devoted to consideration of Arden Triangle and The Arden Academy: where should it be? Should the development of Arden be in a greenbelt area – with the addition of a new primary school and sharing of space or should it be left in situ and redeveloped there.</p> <p>The meeting was asked if The Knowle Society should be supporting a particular view.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal by Arden Academy was for a new academy and primary school with the 2nd area to be housing and open space • Option: within this space, Arden and the Local Authority would like to develop new building. However Stripes Hill House was now the subject of a pre-emptive planning application by Inspired Villages – which had been put forward. • Inspectorate view was that the Academy should redevelop within its own site – which was contrary to the view of the Local Authority (email correspondence shown) • Under the Schools Redevelopment Programme, as announced in December 2022, Arden Academy will be the recipient of grant monies subject to a rebuilding programme <p>The meeting was asked should The Society have a preferred view – whilst preserving the right for judgement. It was made clear that the Planning Committee would be unable to comment until receipt of planning application, to which it would respond on merit.</p> <p>A panel of three trustees: Andrew Marston (Planning), Dave Pinwell (Councillor) and Bill Bohanna (Ex-Governor and Finance and Personnel Committee of Multi-Academy Trust) was convened to put forward their varied perspectives and to answer questions.</p>

It was explained that the Planning Inspectorate was a government body of independent planning experts who would make decisions on application subject to appeal. With regard to the Local Plan, two Inspectors would consider the Draft Local Plan of 2020 submitted by the Local Authority and were currently in correspondence with the Council over some modifications.

Andy Moore stated that he now had a solicitor looking at the case and suggested that the Local Authority, in his opinion, had been out-manoeuvred by the Developers as no agreement had been secured in the first place. He came out against the proposed Retirement Village which he considered would destroy the Village. The Council had sided with the Government that the school should be redeveloped and the housing development should be in the area of the motorway. His view was that Knowle Society should be fighting against the housing application; that Arden should be redeveloped but the lack of land due to the Stripes Hill development made that difficult.

In response, Andrew Marston stated that the date of the original draft Local Plan in 2020 at that time included KN2 and in its response in 2021 The Society had no detail at the time, so it was ignored and went back to the housing scheme to which objection was being made. Various other informal consultations were happening due to the ever-changing scene in Knowle and Solihull. The only way was to give up 2.5% of green belt. At the present time, the decision rested on points to be verified and there would NOT be a further public consultation.

Dave Pinwell felt that fighting the housing development was “dead in the water”. The Draft Local Plan had been submitted and either would be adopted - for the development of housing and go forward – OR not adopted and there would be no Local Plan. This situation would then be a “free for all” for developers and it was in the interests of Knowle for the Draft Plan to be adopted as soon as possible. The question at issue was the development of Arden Academy. The Planning Inspector’s view was that there was no need for a separate site but redevelopment could be within the current footprint. However, the Council was against this proposal and what was being heard was “we don’t want the school to be redeveloped within the footprint – with the impact of disruption to be considered – and it being considered totally unsuitable”.

Question put “are we content for development within current footprint or – as originally planned – to be developed on a separate site for tidy transfer and re-opening on new site – with the old site to be re-developed for housing?” Advantage of this would be the development with suitable housing for younger families to move into who cannot typically move into Knowle with the current housing mix.

Bill Bohanna stated that when the school was first built it was for 750 pupils and now contained 1800. He wanted to see a new site and he considered the funds were nationally available. Stripes Hill residents were in favour of a new Arden some eight years ago but had since changed their minds. He wished to see The Society support the rebuilding of Arden on a greenfield site.

Andy Moore was not happy with the “dead in the water” response as he felt that the Local Plan could be amended and that there would be a final consultation. The last one had taken place in October 2020, blocked at the time due to lockdown. He felt that “housing can be stopped” and that the school should be redeveloped. He appealed for the over-development of housing and felt that the Council is misleading interested parties.

Members were appealed to keep to the topic of Arden School redevelopment and to consider if the trustees of Knowle Society should be taking a view or not.

In answer to a question on whether the government money for redevelopment would cover the building of a new school or an existing school on an existing site (Peter Johnson), the meeting was informed that an award on the schools rebuilding programme was not site specific).

Looking at the Plan of KN2, Andrew Marston stated that the Local Plan draft will be finalised between the Council and the Inspectorate and would include an area of housing – dependent upon whether Arden is relocated to part of that land or on its existing site. Referring to Bill Bohanna’s comment, Andrew stated that it was perfectly feasible to relocate on existing site – but would take longer and cost more and would be subject to disruption etc. At the same time, the School has acknowledged the possibility and was being cautious. He felt that Arden will have either to be redeveloped on site or put on new land under KN2 and that KN2 will happen one way or another. The concern to have was whether or not The Society would be supporting or not – and that The Society is here to listen to views.

Bill Bohanna considered it was not about seeing if rebuilding takes place on site – he felt it was unacceptable for pupils to be educated in that circumstance.

Liz Hulse in answer felt that the surroundings of classrooms should not matter and that it was a lot of fuss about nothing, referencing her past education in temporary Nissen huts which had done her no harm.

Roger Cook put the question that the Council went into the Plan with no agreement with landowners to relocate Arden to Stripes Hill. During the hearings, representatives of landowner on KN2 site stated they would not be selling or making land available. He wondered how it was that you could plan when there is no ability to do so.

Dave Pinwell clarified that this was not about asking for preference between rebuilding between the two sites but the question was for the preference of own site or another suitable site. There was a long way to go and whether, or which, alternative would be achieved. The existing planning application was in for Stripes Hill – but there was no idea of what the outcome might be and that it may not be the only potential solution to re-accommodating a new Academy.

It was not about the provision of a new Arden but the provision of a larger Arden – and the provision of a new primary school – that would be required. It would not be a “like-for-like” but for a far bigger facility with aspirations for that facility to be available for the wider community outside school terms and hours – which limits the use of the existing site.

David Bower thanked all for the passionate and informative contributions made, it was obviously not a straightforward issue and that The Society should be careful in making a preference or “keeping its powder dry”.

The proposal: “Should the Society write in support to the Inspectorate and to Michael Gove or say nothing” was voted upon:

- In favour of saying nothing: 1/3 of those present
- In favour of having a view: less than 1/3 of those present
- Which left a small majority for The Society to say nothing.

Chairman, David Bower, thanked everyone and closed the meeting at 16.36.