



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 6 April 2022 at the Abbey Baptist Church, at 1.45 p.m.

Committee members present: Richard Bennett – Chairman
Penny Kemp - Hon. Treasurer
Amanda Martin
Clare Platts
Lynette Edwell
Richard Stainthorp
Stephen Snook

Other members present: Christabel Winny, Rosemary Woodman, Sean Duggan, Michael Penfold, Liz Marshall, Hazel Alexander, Rodney Oliver, Susan Hora, Chris Widdows, Jean Terry, Judy Westwood, Sylvia Newberry, Roy Burton, Tom Christie, Vickie Abel, John Missenden, Julian Le Patourel, Virginia Day.

Invited Guests present: Jan Brown (Berkshire Family History Society), Marianne Clark (Abbey School), David Dibben (CADRA), Carol Jackson-Doerge (Deputy Lieutenant Royal County of Berkshire), Bettina Kirkham (Berkshire Gardens Trust), Caroline Langdon (U3A), Françoise Le Saux (FORA).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies had been received from 18 members including Alison Bennett, Membership Secretary and Terry Dixon, Committee Member. Of those sending apologies 8 when asked confirmed on email that they supported the motions, the remainder did not respond in time for the meeting. Three invited guests had also sent apologies – John Millar (Berkshire DL and former High Sheriff), Sean Taylor (Berkshire DL), and Andrew Cumpsty.

2. MINUTES OF 2020 AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM held by post and email in September 2020 had been circulated to all members. A proposal to approve the minutes was proposed by Amanda Martin, seconded by Lynette Edwell and accepted unanimously. It had not been possible to hold an AGM in 2021 because of the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO DECEMBER 2021

The Chairman's Report had previously been circulated and made available on the Society's website - <https://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/20220322-RCS-Chairmans-Report-AGM2022.pdf>

Acceptance was proposed by Amanda Martin, seconded by Clare Platts and accepted unanimously

4. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As at March 2022 there are 175 members (including 6 honorary life members). Since the 2020 AGM 12 new members have joined but there has been a decline from 198 in 2019.

Subscriptions for 2021 totalled £1350 (2020 - £1305; 2019 -£1620; 2018 - £1483). Gift Aid added £198 (2020 - £325).

14 members do not have online access and receive notification of the AGM and the relevant documents by post. They receive hard copies of email updates which are now used in place of printed newsletters.

5. HON. TREASURER'S STATEMENT OF THE ACCOUNTS

The Hon Treasurer (Penny Kemp) reviewed the accounts, copies of which were available at the meeting, and which are viewable on the website - <https://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Treasurers-Report-31-Dec-2021.pdf>

Paul Welch RCA had examined the accounts. The balance in the bank at year's end was £12,262 but this included £4376 of restricted funds not available for general expenses. £3975 had been received from GWR for the **Look Draw Build@Reading Station** project which will be delivered in 2022. Additionally, £401 received in 2020 and held on behalf of the CAAC has been re-classified as restricted funds.

The loss recorded for the year (Unrestricted Funds) is £(79) (2020 - £(1,111)).

The Treasurers Report was adopted unanimously, proposed by Stephen Snook and seconded by Richard Stainthorp.

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Amanda Martin took the chair for the election of the Chairman. Richard Bennett agreed to stand for one further year; he was elected unopposed, proposed by Penny Kemp and seconded by Lynette Edwell.

Committee Members: Unfortunately, Adam Sowan was not able to stand again through illness. The Chairman recorded the important role Adam had played in the Civic Society, and in the wider community over many years through his publishing and writing activities. All other members of the Committee were all willing to stand again. They were duly elected en bloc, proposed by Vickie Abel and seconded by Rodney Oliver.

The Society has been unable to attract people to stand for three key roles – Honorary Secretary, Planning Lead, and Website and Social Media Lead. No nominations were received at the AGM and these positions will remain vacant. The Committee will continue to search for volunteers from within the membership.

7. ELECTION OF EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

Paul Welch was willing to continue as examiner of the accounts. He was elected unopposed. Proposed by Penny Kemp, seconded by Christabel Winny.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Stephen Snook read out a report submitted by Terry Dixon on the guided walk activities undertaken in Reading during 2021-22. Terry's Reading Walkabouts is run as a not-for-profit enterprise with proceeds donated to local charities: *"Despite Covid 19 and very few overseas visitors it was a good year and Thames Valley Air Ambulance and Sue Ryder will each receive £830.90. Book sales have raised a further £145 for Berkshire Women's Aid, making a total of £1806.80 for 2021-22. I'm very grateful for the support of Reading Civic Society and its members, particularly the collaboration with Richard Bennett over Heritage Open Days walks. In September 2022 we will be covering The Mount and Redland-Alexandra Road conservation areas. This year's charities are PACT (Parents and Children Together) and the The Royal Berkshire Hospital Charity."*

A question from the audience covered the recruitment of new members, particularly younger people who would become the future committee. Suggestions from the ensuing discussion included; closer collaboration with other Reading groups that are facing the same issues – contacting the Friends of Reading Museum regarding a presence at their annual garden party in Caversham Court, providing regular information to groups such as Reading National Trust and U3A who send regular ‘newsletters’ to their members or possibly taking advertising space in the newsletters.

The Chairman agreed to look at all suggestions with the Committee at their next meeting and encouraged further ideas from the membership. Leaflets were picked up whenever RCS had a public presence and 20 new members had been recruited in the past year, but he confirmed that it was difficult to attract younger members. Public reach-out was very important at events such as WaterFest and although it was often difficult to interest the local media in Civic Society events, he hoped that the LookDrawBuild project would receive positive publicity locally and even regionally.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.25 p.m.

After formal business was concluded the Chairman gave a presentation entitled ‘Looking Forward’, which covered future Civic Society events and projects and summarised some of the current key planning matters and projects in Reading. The highlights of the presentation had previously been circulated to Civic Society members by email dated 24 March or by post and is also available on the Society’s website

<https://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/24-March-2022-update-to-members.pdf>

Events already planned for 2022 include:

28 April	Launch of the LookDrawBuild project for primary schoolchildren
14 May	Lecture on “The rise and fall of Biscuit Town’ by Joe Doak at the Abbey Baptist Church
19 May	Launch of the “Gentlemen Danes” book
10 and 16 Sept	Heritage Open Day guided walks

After the Chairman’s presentation and discussion, refreshments were served, then the High Sheriff of the Royal County of Berkshire, Willie Hartley Russell MVO DL gave a talk reflecting on his role as High Sheriff and the highlights of his Shrieval Year (March 2021 – 8 April 2022). A report on his talk will be circulated to members separately.

13 April 2022