

EXETER ST JAMES FORUM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 4.00pm on Saturday 2 July 2016 at St Sidwell's School Exeter

Robyn Connett took the Chair.

Present: see Appendix 1

1 Apologies: see Appendix 2

2 Minutes of the AGM held 13 June 2015: approved as a true record.

3 Matters arising: none

4 Matters arising not on the agenda: none

5 Steering Group Report 2015-2016:

The Acting Chair gave members the background to the emergence of the Forum and the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan, adopted by Exeter City Council following a referendum in 2013, for “a balanced and vibrant community”. She briefly outlined the work of the Forum’s various projects, groups and panels.

The following aspects of the published Report were highlighted:

(a) Planning & Design Panel

- (i) Football Club/Yeo & Davey Site Development: owing to this matter being subject to legal proceedings a prepared statement was read out on behalf of the Steering Group (see Appendix 3).
- (ii) City Service Station Development, Well Street: permission to build accommodation for 68 students on this site had been refused by ECC Planning Committee as it did not comply with NP Policy C2a (relating to intact streets of traditional housing). The Forum’s assertion that, in addition, the proposal was contrary to the NP’s fundamental aim of improving community balance was supported by our three local Councillors. Consequently the Planning Committee agreed to include in the grounds for refusal Policy H5b of the Local Plan (relating to student developments creating imbalance in a community).
- (iii) Bus Station Development: attention was drawn to two forthcoming consultation events organised by ECC on 5 and 6 July relating to arrangements for temporary facilities during the construction of the new bus station.

(b) Queen’s Crescent Garden

- (i) Compulsory Purchase Order: following the publication of the order the deadline for objections closed on 24 June; it was not yet known if any objectors had come forward.
- (ii) Tea in the Park: a well-supported event held on 25 July to celebrate recent improvements to the garden. A number of residents applied to become members. 2016 has seen an 18% increase in Forum Membership to 256.
- (iii) RHS – It’s Your Neighbourhood Awards: the St James entry in the village category would be assessed on Monday 4 July. Thanks were given to those Forum members who had helped with the organisation, in particular Susie Bower (2016) and Di Boston (2015).

Tribute was paid to the work of Jo Hawkins who had stepped down from the Steering Group and leading role on the PDP. Appreciation of her devotion over five years to securing and delivering the NP was formally proposed and applauded by the meeting. A card was made available for members to sign and record their gratitude.

6 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer spoke to written reports including details of the QCG and ESJVG accounts. Thanks were recorded to both City and County Councillors for financial assistance through community grants.

The report was adopted.

7 Future of Exeter St James Forum

The Acting Chair explained that a Neighbourhood Forum has an initial life of 5 years and that the ESJF constitution required a decision on its future be taken at this year's AGM. The meeting needed therefore to consider whether ESJF should:

- (a) continue in existence or
- (b) be succeeded by an alternative organisation or
- (c) disband.

In the following vote members unanimously supported option (a); no votes were cast in favour of either option (b) or option (c). In addition it was reported that 52 members who had submitted apologies, unable to attend the meeting, had registered a proxy vote in favour of option (a); there were no proxy votes in favour of the other two options.

8 Motions: none

9 Election of Steering Group 2016-2017

- (a) Chair: no nomination received; position vacant
- (b) Treasurer: Annette Plaut, elected unopposed
- (c) Minute Secretary: David Treharne, elected unopposed
- (d) Membership Secretary: Robyn Connett, elected unopposed
- (e) 5 Open Place Members: six nominations received – Susie Bower, Maggie Cartridge, Anne Jobson, Paul Layton, Dan Maxwell and Steve Williams.

Prior to a secret ballot each candidate was invited to address the meeting briefly stating their reasons for wishing to stand. The following were duly elected: Susie Bower, Maggie Cartridge, Anne Jobson, Paul Layton and Dan Maxwell.

10 AOB

Members raised the following issues:

(a) Community Balance

- (i) The Forum's stance in upholding the fundamental aim of the NP to address the imbalance in the community caused by ever increasing student numbers was supported.
- (ii) Student cars placed an intolerable burden on our residential streets and effects were now over spilling into adjacent areas such as Pennsylvania. Questions were asked whether the University could ban students from bringing cars as a condition of admission whereas present policy was only to dissuade. It was reported that the University Task and Finish Group was to look at this issue and that a draft Sustainable Travel Plan was out for consultation. Members' attention was drawn to the current Express & Echo petition calling for a ban on all student cars in Exeter.

(b) Bus Station Redevelopment

- (i) Concerns were raised about the closure of Paris Street to allow further pedestrianisation and the consequent increase in congestion and pollution of streets in St James. Doubts were cast over whether authority would be granted and if it were a public inquiry was likely. It was reported that ECC carry out routine assessments of air quality and that current readings were within safe guidelines.
- (ii) Members were reminded of the two consultation events on 5 and 6 July which would consider among other matters temporary arrangements for bus drop off points in Sidwell Street

(c) Legal Challenge

- (i) A question was raised regarding an individual's exposure to costs in view of the Forum's legal challenge to the planning permission granted for the Football Club/Yeo & Davey Site. It was explained that to date all legal advice had been provided pro bono and no Forum funds had been used for this purpose. As previously stated, submission to the High Court had included application for a Protective Costs Order (PCO) to limit our and the defendant's costs to £5k.
- (ii) The Steering Group was thanked and spontaneously applauded for its courageous step in taking legal action in defence of the NP.

(d) Draft Budget 2016-2017

In view of the decision taken to continue in existence (item 5) the Treasurer presented a draft budget for the coming year which was approved.

A vote of thanks was given to Robyn Connett as Acting Chair for her excellent conduct of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.