



THE
NORWICH
SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024 – DRAFT MINUTES

Tuesday 30th April 2024 at 7pm - The Auditorium in the Forum, Millennium Plain

In the presence of the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Councillor James Wright

1. **Welcome to the Lord Mayor by the Chair**

The Chair of The Norwich Society, Jon Boon welcomed the Lord Mayor and members to the meeting.

Participants: 55 Members

The Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress and Sarah Gore also attended.

2. **Short address by the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Councillor James Wright**

The meeting was opened by the Lord Mayor of Norwich, the Honorary President of The Norwich Society giving a short address.

The Mayor expressed his pleasure at attending the meeting, saying that it gave him the opportunity to acknowledge the tireless work of the Society in protecting Norwich's historic built environment, acting as champions for sustainable development and ensuring that it was in keeping with the city's character.

The Lord Mayor noted the Society was also remarkable in bringing people together through its programme of events and helping to foster a sense of pride in the city and also introduce people to the many wonderful places and undiscovered gems the city had to offer. The Lord Mayor noted he was active in promoting the city as a tourist destination and the opportunities offered by the twinning programme, and that plans were being discussed for reinstating a tourist Information Centre somewhere in the vicinity of City Hall.

The Lord Mayor ended by thanking The Norwich Society for helping to make a brighter future for Norwich.

3. **Apologies** were received from Mary Ash, Michael Jordan, David Taylor, Neil Sturgeon, Catherine Dorman, Richard Card, David Ford and Michael Fowler.

4. **Minutes of the 2023 AGM**

The 2023 AGM minutes were posted on the Society's website . One member noted that the Minutes said that the meeting had taken place at The Assembly House and It should have said The Forum, but this was subsequently checked and was found not to be the case so no amendment was needed.

The adoption of the minutes was proposed by Vanessa Trevelyan and seconded by Simeon Jackson.

5. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising,

6. **Current Chair's presentation of Annual Report - Jon Boon**

Jon Boon noted that much of his address is included in the 2024 Annual Report and that the illustrated slide presentation would be uploaded to the website.

Jon began by noting that it was an honour to serve as Chair and went on to thank Barry Howell, former chair, saying that it was to his credit that the Society emerged intact following a difficult period which included Covid and the Ukraine war and their impact on the financial situation.

Jon referred to the Society's Norwich 100 exhibition held in the Forum in September 2023, a key element of the Society's Centenary celebrations which identified 100 places that The Norwich Society had saved, protected or influenced in some way. He noted that today it seemed extraordinary that Elm Hill and The Assembly House had ever been at risk of being demolished, but that whilst there were now more rigorous systems in place and perhaps a different view of the value of the historic built environment, the Society was still needed to help mitigate the negative aspects of development and champion good new development in the city. Jon noted that during the 10 days of the exhibition we had the opportunity to tell the general public what the Society does and as a result signed up over 50 new members and sold over 200 exhibition catalogues.

Jon reported that the Planning Appraisal Committee (PAC) had continued to provide comprehensive responses to planning applications, noting that there was a constant pressure to increase the height of buildings in the city referring to the Debenhams development where there are plans to replace the five-story building with a development with different height sections up to eight stories. Jon proposed that the Society continues to have a crucial role to play in ensuring developments are suitable and in context. Jon noted that the Society has regular meetings with key Individuals in the City Council, acting as a critical friend and supporting the council wherever possible.

Jon updated members on the work of the Strategic Planning and Transportation Committee (SP&T), noting that the Greater Norwich Local Plan has been adopted and that this will provide a greater sense of certainty regards the development of the city over the next two decades, but that the East Norwich Masterplan has not been approved which may result in a more piecemeal development process if some sites are approved independently. Jon noted that SP&T responds to major development consultations including on transport.

The Civic Environment Committee (CEC) is busy auditing the banks of the City's two rivers with a view to influencing future development to improve public access. It has also produced a new survey and report on weathervanes in the city and revised its survey of clocks and sundials.

The Building Conservation Committee (BCC), noted by Jon as representing some of the Society's most important activities, is proactively seeking solutions to deal with buildings at risk and persuading the City Council to make this a priority going forward. One of the projects it is hoping to lead on and seeking funding for is a Norwich specific retrofit toolkit to help make historic buildings more sustainable and energy efficient.

Jon proposed that the greatest challenge to the city was the impact of climate change, noting that the Society were working in partnership with other organisations to see how the impact can be mitigated. A conference and trade exhibition focusing on the implications of climate change for local businesses and communities is planned for October 2024.

Lastly Jon noted that the 2023 Design and Craftsmanship Awards were hugely successful, attracting nearly 50 nominations over 5 building categories, including a new 'Sustainability' category won by Mutton's Mill in Halvergate. The winners demonstrated the high quality of

design and craftsmanship that can be achieved in Norwich and Norfolk. Winners included Digi-tech factory at City College, NUA's Duke Street Riverside building, and the new East Anglian Air Ambulance headquarters. The Sir Bernard Fielden award was extended to include greater Norwich and won by Ruth Brennan for Drayton Lodge. Jon thanked Lady Fielden for presenting the award for the last time, the role is being taken on by Sir Bernard's son.

Jon concluded his presentation by thanking everybody on the Centenary Planning Group, in particular Vanessa Trevelyan for her work on the Norwich 100 Exhibition, and also the Publications Working Group and Vicky Manthorpe for writing the Autumn 2023 Centenary Edition of Aspects of Norwich. Jon also thanked: members of the other committees and working groups, in particular Michael Blackwell for finding so many interesting speakers for the Talks Series; The Forum Trust for making the Norwich 100 exhibition possible; The late Fred Dustin for his wonderful photographs; Larking and Gown for supporting membership mailings and EDS systems for its continued patronage.

7. Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts

Jon Boon presented the accounts on behalf of the Treasurer Neil Sturgeon who was unable to attend. He emphasised that finances were not his strength and any questions he could not answer would be followed up after the meeting. Jon noted that the majority of the Society's income came from subscriptions, events and publications. In 2023 there had been a significant one-off cost to revamp the functional aspects of the website and also expenditure related to the centenary celebrations resulting in a loss, but going forward, we have put together a break-even budget enabled by the increase in the cost of subscriptions, events and publications, and helped also by the increase in membership subscriptions to 827 individual members compared with 741 in 2023. The Society is also supported by 20 businesses and groups. There were no questions.

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Jon Boon and seconded by Vanessa Trevelyan.

8. 2023-2024 Centenary Events Programme

Vanessa Trevelyan, Chair of the Publications and Events Committee and member of the Centenary Committee took members through the Society's activities over the last year. *(Full details can be found In the 2024 Annual Report)*

The centenary celebrations were launched in March 2023 on Bishop Bridge followed by a reception in The Great Hospital. The event was supported by the Lord Mayor, Sheriff and Whifflers. There was a series of centenary walks thanks to the Norwich City Guides and a quiz in the EDP and Norfolk Magazine asking how much people knew about historic Norwich compiled by Jonathan Hooton. Jonathan was also responsible for coming up with the list of 100 places for the Norwich 100 exhibition and writing the captions. The exhibition took place in The Forum during Heritage Open Days week in September 2023 and was a great success. 32,395 visited The Forum during the exhibition and we gained over 50 new members. People's Choice generated a list of places loved by the general public, some with personal explanations for the choice, and a Norwich 100 trail enabled people to go and explore the city. The feedback was incredibly positive. Vanessa thanked The Forum Trust and in particular Katie and Sam for supporting her and Rachel to plan and install the exhibition. Vanessa also thanked our photographer Fred Dustin who worked tirelessly over 18 months to get the right shots, and who was able to attend the exhibition launch but sadly died later that September.

Vanessa went on to mention the Society's other events and activities including the extensive and popular talks programme, visits to interesting houses and the centenary dinner held in the Assembly House.

9. Election of trustees

Jon Boon noted that other than the position of Chair whose term of office is two years, all other Officers and Executive Committee positions are open for election. Nomination forms to stand for election were sent in the post or by email to all members in March 2024. Details of candidates have also been circulated and can be viewed on the website.

Standing:

David Taylor (Vice-Chair and Honorary Secretary, re-election)

Neil Sturgeon (Honorary Treasurer, re-election)

John Howkins (Trustee, re-election)

Michael Jordan (Trustee, re-election)

Willem Buttinger (Trustee, re-election)

Alan Theobald (Trustee, re-election)

Karen Watling (Trustee – election)

Jon proposed that voting was carried out en bloc.

RK confirmed there were sufficient members present for the meeting to be quorate (*5% of membership*).

Barry Howell proposed that all the candidates standing were elected. This was seconded by Penny Clarke.

9. Any Other Business

A Member in the audience said he was delighted that the city was looking into reintroducing a Tourist Information Office and asked how the Society could support this. The Lord Mayor said the City Council was currently working up proposals for where it would be and how it would be operated.

INTERVAL

Jon Boon introduced Sarah Gore, Chair of the Norwich Historic Churches Trust

who gave an illustrated presentation about the work of the Norwich Historic Churches Trust, the churches it cares for, how they are used and the challenges they face and responded to questions from the audience.

Jon Boon thanked Sarah for her fascinating talk and everybody for attending and closed the meeting.