



Annual General Meeting
of the
ENGLISH HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM
held at 5pm on 18 October 2006
in the Council Chamber, Council Offices
Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds

Present:

Cllr Michael Bunting	E Cambridgeshire D C	Sam Howes	Chichester D C
Bill Cotton	Swindon Borough Co	Brian Human	Cambridge City Co
Cllr Anthea Davidson	E Cambridgeshire D C	Ian Poole (Chair)	St Edmundsbury Borough Co
Kate Dickson	Ancoats Building Preservation Trust Ltd	Graham Reddie	West MASA
Jenny Greenhalgh	Lancaster Civic Socy	Brian Smith	EAHTR
Chris Hargreaves	Birmingham City Co	Prue Smith	Consultant
Air Marshal Sir Reginald Harland	Bury St Edmunds Socv	Rob Surl	Shropshire County Co
Nick Hayward	RPS Planning, Transport & Env't	Richard Tuffrey	High Peak Boro' Co
Ian Heggie	Stratford-upon-Avon Socv & West MASA	Chris Wade	Action for Market Towns
		Chris Winter	EHTF
		Tony Wyatt	Newcastle City Co

Ian Poole, Chair, welcomed Members to the meeting.

1. Apologies

Steve Bee, English Heritage
Sharon Cosgrove, Oxford City Council
Philip Godwin, North Norfolk District Council
Dave Jobbins, Christchurch Borough Council
Michael Loveday, HEART
David Reed, Canterbury City Council

2. Minutes of the last meeting (held on 19 October 2005)

Agreed as a true record. Proposed by Richard Tuffrey; seconded by Rob Surl.

3. Matters arising

None

4. Presentation of Annual Report

4.1 The Report had been circulated to Members and IP presented it to the Meeting. He said that the Forum had had a busy year and as well as responding to matters arising from Government, good practice documents had been produced and many events delivered. He gave a brief resume of these.

4.2 He considered that the bi-monthly newsletters were a great success but were very resource intensive and in the coming year ways of enhancing this communication with Members would be examined. Three guidance documents had been published – “Retail Guidance”, in Partnership with English Heritage; “Making better applications for listed building consent” and “Focus on Tourism”, for which he thanked Brian Human and the Tourism Task Group, and commented that this was very well received at the recent European symposium in Dubrovnik.

4.3 Some of the projects undertaken during the year would be continued; the Conservation Area Appraisal training was very well attended and the potential for further training for Management Plans would be explored with UWE. Following the publication of the case study material from the Ely conference (Focus on Housing Growth) further work is underway with Pegasus Planning Group LLP to produce a guidance document. The Forum will continue to respond to consultation papers as appropriate. IP thanked everyone involved in the projects for their help and support.

4.4 IP was grateful for the ongoing sponsorship given by the Forum’s Partners and support for events and publications from various organisations. In recognition of the in-kind support received from UWE, the University has now been recognised as a Sponsor / Partner. Further sponsorship would also be sought in the coming year.

4.5 Membership continues to grow, but there is no room for complacency, and efforts would continue to attract new members.

4.6 The survey of Members and the Strategy Meeting had been useful in informing the development of the Business Plan 2007- 09 and in ensuring that the Forum continues to engage with the Members in order to support their needs.

4.7 In partnership with UWE in Bristol a very successful project on Conservation Area Appraisals has been carried out and will be continued. The website has been developed to offer a greater range of facilities for Members and as a major access point to the Forum’s activities. There is further potential and it will continue to be developed. Unfortunately, one of the team, Sam Barber, will be leaving at the end of the year to join her husband in the US; it has been agreed that someone will be recruited to the post as soon as possible. The team moved to larger accommodation within the Faculty of the Built Environment during the summer.

4.8 The Forum continues to work in partnership with other organisations and some of these activities are listed in the Report. This gives an indication of the profile that the Forum now has in the sector. As part of these activities the Chair and Director will travel to Ireland in November to establish links with the Irish Walled Towns Network, which has recently been set up.

4.9 The Finance Report was endorsed by Bill Cotton, Honorary Treasurer, who commented that the web facilities would help to drive income generation. He considered that although a reasonable balance was carried forward, the Forum needed to raise income levels which would be addressed in the next year. He thanked the Sponsor/Partners for their support and interest and the local authorities, who may find it difficult, but who continued to support the Forum. He also thanked the administration team and the Director, for her ‘prudence’.

4.10 In response to IP’s invitation for comments, Sir Reginald Harland said that income generation should be a priority – through enlarged Membership for instance. CW responded that this was included in the Business Plan which would be implemented with a ‘recruitment drive’ to the new expanded categories of Membership.

4.11 The Annual Report was accepted by the Meeting.

5. Business Plan 2007 – 2009 and Constitutional Changes

5.1 IP introduced the Business Plan and explained some of the major changes that it proposed, in particular:

- expansion of Local Authority membership
- expansion of the Executive Committee to include representation from all categories of membership
- tenure of the Chair to be one year (instead of two)
- support for the Chair through the two Vice Chairs, including the out-going Chair
- feasibility of expanding the membership across the UK
- confirmation of the legal status of the organisation
- efforts to secure the immediate and long term resourcing of the organisation

5.2 The Business Plan also set out the strategic priorities and proposals for a new scale of fees.

5.3 An amendment to the version circulated was proposed by IP: to increase the number of Local Authority representative on the Executive Committee to a maximum of eight plus the four officers (Chair, two Vice Chairs and Honorary Treasurer. This was agreed.

5.4 IP invited comments and asked that the Business Plan be adopted. This was proposed by Sam Howes and seconded by Ian Heggie and agreed by the Meeting.

5.5 Changes to the Constitution were proposed, in line with the proposals in the Business Plan. IP presented an amended Constitution which was agreed by the Meeting. (Proposed by Richard Tuffrey and seconded by Chris Hargreaves.)

6. Election of Executive Committee Members

6.1 The officers were proposed as follows:

- Chair – Brian Human, Cambridge City Council
- Vice Chair (out going Chair) - Ian Poole, St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- Vice Chair – Tony Wyatt, Newcastle City Council
- Honorary Treasurer – Bill Cotton, Swindon Borough Council

The following were proposed as representatives of the Local Authority Members:

- Sharon Cosgrove, Oxford City Council
- Chris Hargreaves, Birmingham City Council
- Sam Howes, Chichester District Council
- Dave Jobbins, Christchurch Borough Council
- David Reed, Canterbury City Council
- Rob Surl, Shropshire County Council
- Richard Tuffrey, High Peak Borough Council

Proposed by Sam Howes; seconded by Ian Heggie; agreed by the Meeting.

6.2 Ian Heggie was proposed by Graham Reddie, and seconded by G R Goodall, Chair of West MASA, to represent the Civic & Amenity Members. This was agreed by the Meeting.

6.3 It was proposed and agreed that Nick Hayward, RPS Planning, Transport and Environment, would continue to represent the Sponsor/Partners.

6.4 IP proposed that Steve Bee, Mike Loveday, Prue Smith, and Brian Smith continued to be co-opted to the Executive Committee, which was agreed by the Meeting.

7. Sponsors' Reports

7.1 On behalf of the Sponsor/Partners Nick Hayward said that he was pleased with the progress of the Forum and with the programme of activities. These covered a good range of topics and were well attended. The profile of the Forum was good and he was happy to continue to be a part of it.

7.2 He said that he appreciated the fact that the Director had met with all of the Partners individually to discuss their interests and the potential for joint projects. He hoped that this might continue on a regular basis.

7.3 He was pleased to contribute to the Annual Conference and hoped to use this as an opportunity to meet with representatives of the other Partners to discuss their interests.

7.4 He considered it had been a good year and that association with EHTF was good value for money!

7.5 IP reiterated the value to the Forum and its Members of the Partnerships, in appreciating the private sector viewpoint and contributions to events and publications, as well as the financial support. He especially thanked NH for his continued support and contribution to the Executive Committee.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Brian Smith presented the report from the European Association of Historic Towns & Regions (EAHTR). He commented on the Symposium held in Gothenburg in 2005 and the recent Symposium held in Dubrovnik. He also presented the Dubrovnik Declaration. He updated the Meeting on the progress of the projects – INHERIT, EPOCH and CULTSTAT – with which the Association is engaged.

A study tour to the Netherlands had been agreed in principle with the Dutch Association and the Finnish Association had reiterated their interest in a visit to England.

A symposium in partnership with the Council of Europe was planned to explore modernity in historic towns, to which Tony Wyatt had already contributed a paper.

IP thanked BS and suggested that the study tour to Netherlands should take place during the first week of June and the Finnish visit in September. He asked for details to be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 15th November in order that it could be included in next year's programme of activities. SH pointed out that the event in Verona clashed with Cityscape 2007 which was unfortunate.

8.2 As he approached the end of his term as Chair, IP thanked the members of the Executive Committee for their support over the last two years. He had found it stimulating and had learned a great deal. He also thanked the Director and her team and looked forward to his continuing involvement. He welcomed Brian (Human) who had already made a significant contribution to the Forum over the past year and many before that as Chair of the Tourism Working Group.

8.3 Sam Howes proposed a vote of thanks to Ian, who had given a great deal of his own time, in difficult circumstances and had also carried out much of the ground work for publications past and present.

Chris Winter
EHTF
1st November 2006