

BANBURY CIVIC SOCIETY.

Annual General Meeting.

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS.

*St Mary's Church Centre, Horsefair, Banbury,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2019, 7.04-9.35 p.m.*

Mr ROB KINCHIN-SMITH, in the chair.

1. **Welcome by the Chairman.** Mr ROB KINCHIN-SMITH (RKS) welcomed members to the meeting. An Attendance Register was circulated. There were sufficient members present to form a quorum. Welcome.
Meeting quorate.

2. **Apologies for absence.** RKS called for any apologies for absence. Mrs ADRIENNE REES-BROWN (ARB) had collated a list, and would send them to NEIL IDEN (NI) for inclusion in the minutes. NI thanked her. There were no further apologies reported. Apologies.

[Here the meeting adjourned for a talk by Mr NIC POOLE (NP),
of Fort Locks Self-Storage and the Banbury Business Improvement District, on
“ *The aims of the Banbury B.I.D. and how these will mesh with the Civic Society's objectives* ”.
This was followed by further refreshments, and the meeting reconvened at 8.20 p.m.]

3. RKS proposed a Vote of Thanks to NP for both his presentation and stepping in to cover Ms JO HOLLAND's last minute absence owing to sickness, agreed *nem. con.* Copies of the Banbury B.I.D.'s latest *Bulletin*, May 2019, were circulated to all.

4. [3rd Item.] **Approval of the Minutes for 2018.** RKS thanked NI for the minutes of 2018, and NI expressed gratitude at the appreciation of their style of compositing. RKS proposed one change to ¶5(a), *delete* whole first line, and *add* note to ¶5 above : the Chairmanship was shared on an alternate basis at each subsequent Committee meeting by RKS and Mr PETER MONK (PM). With these changes, the Minutes of the meeting of 2018 were seconded by ARB, and agreed by a show of hands, *nem. con.* Amendment to
previous minutes.

5. [4th.] **Report by Treasurer.** RKS invited ARB to present the accounts to the end of 30th April, 2019, for the society, copies circulated to members. ARB thanked him, and reported a decline in membership owing to a noticeable increase in mortality this year. Some queries about declined Standing Orders had been unanswered. Expenditure had been much the same as last year, with a healthy surplus of £554.21 remaining, less the pending cost of the Newsletters' printing, copies as circulated. The latter were well received by members. Membership slight
decline. Surplus
of £554.21.

6. Mr BRIAN GOODEY (BG) asked if it was possible to recruit new younger members. ARB agreed something needed to be done thus. The society had talked to local schools and colleges about its work many years ago, but nothing had resulted. PM added he had talked to various staff at Banbury & Bicester College about the medieval bridge arches, and the same had happened. RKS remarked recruiting young people was always an uphill struggle, their being more interested in joining 'Facebook', rather than societies. With more new residents in Banbury, including young retirees, these would be more likely members, being free of work and children. There used to be a mention in the *Banbury Guardian* every week. ARB replied she had eighty-seven members on an e-mail list, and had arranged a mention of this A.G.M. in the monthly *Your Letterbox* magazine. She tried to arrange outings on dates suitable for as many members as possible, but these were less well attended than hoped owing to their being so busy with their own activities. A trip was being arranged in September to the Jodrell Bank Radio-Telescope and the Anderton Boat Lift. There were no further questions. RKS proposed the accounts be accepted, seconded by BG, and approved by a show of hands, *nem. con.* There was nothing else reported.

[Here BG left the meeting, at 8.34 p.m.]

7. [5th Item.] **Election of Officers.** RKS called for any nominations. ARB reported receiving no further candidates. There were none received from the floor. The following persons were elected to the posts :

7 (a).	POST.	CANDIDATE.	PROPOSED.
SECONDED.			
<i>Chair</i>	ROB KINCHIN-SMITH.	PETER MONK.	NIC POOLE.
<i>Vice-Chair</i>	PETER MONK.	ROB KINCHIN-SMITH.	NIC POOLE.
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	ADRIENNE REES-BROWN.		
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	ADRIENNE REES-BROWN.		

8. There were no other officers elected. RKS called for questions from the floor. PM asked about methods of recruitment to the society ; with all the new homes being built about the town, could leaflets be put into *Your Letterbox*, and left at housing sales offices ? Several suggestions were made from the floor, including estate agents' 'Welcome packs' for new homeowners, and commuters at the railway station, the latter perhaps using the Chiltern Railways 'Community Board'. It was agreed PM should make enquiries.

9. NP asked if the society had considered corporate sponsorship. PM replied the society took advantage of free office accommodation, with perquisites. NP continued, saying a general increase in membership rates, combined with cash, staff secondments, or a paid sales assistant, could help focus on sales, which might double or triple membership and increase revenue. This could be used to fund other things, such as research. He knew of a "dynamic" saleswoman who had doubled membership of a sports club in eighteen months.

10. RKS said the society's surplus was growing, but it was still not enough to do anything specific with. ARB reminded the meeting the society had to be able to reply to the question 'But what do you do ?' Members needed to be given something, such as guest speakers and relevant outings each year, and see results. NP replied he thought just a newsletter and a few speakers would suffice, and the membership fee could be raised by up to £36 without harm; this was only £3 per month. ARB said the society had to be aware of what others were charging, and this meant the History Society, membership of which cost rather less. Discussion was opened to the floor, members suggesting Royal Leamington Spa's civic society was very successful. Banbury's surrounding villages and the areas of new housing being built could be plied with leaflets. It would take only a day to put leaflets in the houses of Middleton Cheney. RKS thanked all for their suggestions, and was sanguine, saying he thought the society's job was almost done. NP joked that from a planning point of view, it was always an "ongoing battle." RKS replied there had been much success, and the 'tanker was being turned'. A lot of good had happened, and while Banbury was a long way from being the tourist honey-pot of Bath, it was gratifying to see the town growing, and the society should make people want to visit. There were no further questions.

11. [6th Item.] **Chairman's Report.** RKS thanked the Committee for all their work over the previous year. Sharing the Chair with PM had worked, and he thanked him for his representing the society on the Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee. ARB had been a fantastic Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary, and Mr JOHN BATTS (JB) had been a great help with society administration ; he could not thank them enough. Mr ROBERT RICHWOOD had provided help with the Town Centre Partnership, and Mr DAVID FINLAY had helped with I.T. and reprographics. Mrs HELEN MIDDLETON had been of great assistance as the 'Lifetime Resident' on the Committee. Mr ALEX FISHER (AF) had been ably taking the monthly minutes, and maintaining the 'web presence'.

12. RKS wanted to reflect on the changes to Banbury in the last year, and look to the future. The major change had been Cherwell District Council (C.D.C.) buying the Castle Quay shopping centre, and continuing with the 'CQ2' scheme. This would make a significant difference to the town centre, and all credit was due to the council for doing this.

13. Warehouses were continuing to be built along the central M40 ; the society wanted to see development in the town providing high-skilled, high-paying jobs for residents. Local 'eyesores' were being transformed. Crown House was being converted into affordable housing. After many requests, in 2017 C.D.C.'s Conservation Area Appraisal was updated, with extensions into historic Neithrop, Castle-street, and along the Bloxham-road. Although it did not extend all the way along the Warwick-road to the site of the Workhouse, RKS hoped this might be achieved in a 'final push' next year. Then Banbury's Victorian area would be "wrapped up".

14. AF had launched the splendid new web-site, which had been dormant for five years. There was less demolition of old buildings these days. The 'Junction 11' development, on an already very busy roundabout, had been refused by C.D.C. after many objections by local organisations. The resubmitted scheme consisted of two big warehouses and other multi-purpose buildings. Objectors continued to ask 'Why ?' This was not accommodation for 'high-end' employers. PM added he and Wardington Parish Council had been allowed only five minutes to speak at the planning hearing, but it had been passed on the 10th May. NP remarked businesses needed small industrial units, not big warehouses. RKS added it would be interesting to see whether the demand for warehousing and storage would increase with changes to the distribution industry after Brexit.

15. Ms JANE KILSBY spoke on the forthcoming hundredth anniversary celebrations of the People's Park, on Sunday, 14th July. It would not be an attempt to recreate the commemorations of 1919 but reflect the Banbury of to-day, celebrating the council's ownership. There were still some well-loved and interesting original features remaining, and it had always been called the "People's Park" from Mr GEORGE BALL's original will. There was to be a procession led by a Fine Lady on a white horse, followed by local groups such as the Guides and Scouts, businesses, and charities. There were still places available for anyone to participate. The procession would open the fete in the park for the whole day. RKS added it had been a subscription park before, with paid entry to tea gardens, *etc.* The whole park was then dedicated as a war memorial with the cenotaph. C.D.C. had put in a planning application to open a café in the grounds. This was a lovely idea, but it had to be the right café and caterer. For example, Wychwood Straw Bale café was located on a "road to nowhere".

16. RKS mentioned the views for and against 'pastiche architecture', citing examples of recent refurbishment and rebuilding in Banbury. The "Marlborough Arms" on Gatridge-road had been turned into flats, which was very good indeed. A site on Calthorpe-street had been granted consent for a building similar to what had been there originally. Pepper-alley had been rebuilt in a similar, 'retro', style, with lots of little business units and profitable housing above them. This all helped fill the holes in the town's fabric. PM added the current policy was not to provide car-parking spaces, but provision for bicycles upstairs.

17. RKS continued the town centre was empty thirty years ago. Now building was all about housing above shops for young professionals. How far we have come ! There had been

less good news with some of the pubs : the “Duke of Wellington” and “Randle Inn” had been less well developed. The Grand Theatre development broke his heart. The society had fought to have it listed as an Asset of Community Value, but it had been revoked a day later. Consequently, the facade had been retained, but the inside torn out and sixteen flats inserted behind. It was not known what would happen to the Odeon Cinema when the CQ2's opened. Would this be turned into housing ? Odeon had just renewed a twenty-five year lease on the building.

18. Banbury continued to offer opportunities, and RKS looked forward to working collaboratively with all, pulling in the same direction. C.D.C. now had a design and conservation team of four. He was very optimistic, and hoped the Civic Society continued to play a leading part in taking the town forward. Members should be proud of what had been achieved, and he thanked them for their continued support.

19. The Chair's report was received with much approbation. The raffle winners were drawn. RKS thanked all for attending, and closed the meeting at 9.35 p.m.

Minutes : NI.

APPENDIX.

List of Apologies.

TOM BROWN.