

## **The London Forum Annual General Meeting**

### **Minutes of the 2019 AGM of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies**

Held 6.30pm, 3rd October 2019, at 77 Cowcross Street, London EC1

Present:

Peter Eversden (Chairman) and representatives of the Barnet Society, Bermondsey Street London, Camberwell Society, Camden Society, Finchley Society, Friends of Jubilee Gardens, Friends of St George's Gardens, Gidea Park & District Civic Society, Hammersmith Society, Heath & Hampstead Society, Highbury Community Association, Highgate Society, Islington Society, Kensington Society, Kew Society, Mill Hill Preservation Society, Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association, Pembridge Association, Pinner Association, Putney Society, Stamford Brook Residents' Association, Sydenham Society, Telegraph Hill Society, Thorney Island Society, Tottenham Civic Society, Westcombe Society, Wimbledon Society, York House Society, and Darian Mitchell (individual member)

Apologies for absence:

Barnet Residents' Association, Friends of Greenwich Park, Ladywell Society, St Marylebone Society, Seven Dials Trust.

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

The Chairman recorded the Forum's appreciation of Alan Baxter and his staff in the provision of office and meeting space, facilities and valuable networking opportunities with so many other organisations in their building and for their interest and support for the Forum's work.

The Chairman described the network of organisations in Cowcross Street and noted that Alan Baxter had asked him to pass on how much he and many others appreciate the work that London Forum members do, and the following message: "London would be seriously damaged without you all, so keep it up!"

#### **2. Minutes of the AGM 31st October 2018**

The Minutes of the 2018 AGM had been circulated in Newsforum. The Chairman asked for any comments. In the absence of comments he proposed the acceptance of those Minutes. They were agreed, *nem con*.

#### **3. Chairman's report**

The Chairman reported that the Mayor's new plan was over six hundred pages and very different to earlier versions. It would take planners and communities some time to get used to it.

The process of responding to the draft New London Plan was a very demanding schedule over eighteen months, finishing in May this year, and had been reported in two editions of Newsforum.

In July, the GLA issued a new version of the plan with many major suggested changes and it remained to be seen what the examination Inspectors would make of those. Their report was with the Mayor, who would write to the Secretary of State to say what recommendations he was prepared to accept, and then the Secretary of State would respond. The New London Plan should be approved and effective early next year, although it was already a material consideration for boroughs when determining planning applications.

The London Plan will have to be revised to take account of the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework as it was compiled when the 2012 NPPF version was current.

The annual report summarised what London Forum thought to be problems with the new Plan. The housing targets seemed to be unachievable, particularly that almost half of all new homes should be for low cost rent. The tall buildings policies could result in development overwhelming local infrastructure.

The presumption in favour of development on small sites seemed likely to challenge members' boroughs' ability to control such growth and could therefore result in delivery of buildings not suitable for the character and context locally and not providing what is needed. London Forum had sent a letter to the Mayor seeking a delay in implementing that policy until the Councils have done more work on their local plans. The new National Planning Policy Framework and the New London Plan introduced the need for boroughs to have design codes and Site Allocations to make clear what they will approve and what would not be acceptable. One of the prior Open Meetings covered that, and was reported in Newsforum. The Government had that week published guidance on design as reported in the Updates page of the London Forum website.

The Chairman noted that it was important that each Society chased its Council to make sure progress was made on such planning changes and on the creation of design codes in preparation for the small sites policy. Without them, residents would get what developers wanted to supply.

London Forum had been involved in a number of transport matters, including aviation and Heathrow expansion. London Forum objected to shortening of bus routes and reduced frequency of buses but TfL implemented most of those proposals.

London Forum had contributed to many consultations, as reported in the Annual Report and in 'What We've Said' pages of our web site, but the GLA and the Assembly had been occupied with the New London Plan and the Government had made little progress on legislation as it grappled with one major issue. As a result, London Forum still awaited the outcome of various proposals, which would be reported on as updates.

The Chairman hoped members had someone keeping an eye on the web site for new items and following Twitter postings from @London\_Forum, which were also reproduced with links on each page of the London Forum website. Updates could be every few days and our e-bulletins could not be that frequent.

London Forum had supported one particular scrutiny that the Assembly initiated on the Mayor's call-in of planning applications and London Forum gave evidence to their

Committee about recent cases. The outcome of the Mayor's interventions was rarely satisfactory and London Forum was seeking better GLA support for decisions of the boroughs.

A few new societies had joined recently and London Forum was reaching out into the areas in North East and East London which would see major growth so that we could recruit and support community groups there. The Chairman asked members to look out for community groups that they thought should be members of London Forum.

London Forum had conducted a survey of members, held an open meeting on developing societies' membership and would be holding another event to pursue that subject further.

Other open meetings had covered town centres, better urban design, viability of development and improving the public realm. One event had included speakers from a large and a small developer and from a local authority on community engagement, 'considerate' construction and modern methods of building. London Forum had been fortunate to have had some very experienced speakers holding significant jobs related to all those subjects, including the immediate past President of the RIBA.

The Chairman expressed his wish to have two or three times the number of society representatives present at our open meetings to challenge speakers and to find out what is going on that would help members in working with their own council.

The Annual Report recorded that London Forum works with many other organisations to achieve influence and to make sure community needs and concerns are represented.

The Chair expressed his hope that members shared his sense of pride in what the London Forum has achieved and he extended his thanks and, he hoped, members' appreciation to the members of the Executive and the Planning, Environment and Transport committees for their hard work. Ian McInnes was stepping down as a trustee and the Chairman thanked him for his work in the year.

#### **4. Approval of Annual Report and Accounts for 2018/19**

The Treasurer noted that the London Forum had adopted Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102, a requirement of the Charities Commission. The relevant Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and FRS 102 required that, where practical, charities record the benefit of donations received in kind, and that the accounts should include a restatement for the previous year. The Trustees had concluded that it was impractical to value the time donated by volunteers.

On the other hand, it was practical to identify the value of the office accommodation kindly provided by Alan Baxter Ltd, which had increased both the income and the expense columns with offsetting amounts, due to the imputed donation and the imputed matching rental expense. This had the effect of significantly increasing the totals of both columns reported in the prior year, but the restatement did not change the overall surplus previously reported.

Charities were also expected under the SORP to separate expenses incurred in fundraising and in furthering their charitable purposes, but none of the Forum's expenses had been attributed to fundraising activities.

The annual surplus of £2,275 had been added to the Forum's general reserve. The Trustees had a plan to commission a new website and new databases, which was expected to consume a proportion of the reserves.

Mr Hammerson of the Highgate Society asked whether there were any tax implications due to FRS 102, and the Treasurer confirmed that there were not. In response to another questioner the Treasurer also confirmed that the investments were all held in interest bearing bank accounts, and not in shares.

Mr Bosi of the Islington Society proposed approval of the Annual Report and Accounts; Oliver Bennett of the Wimbledon Society seconded that. The motion was approved *nem con*.

### **5. Appointment of Honorary Independent Examiner**

Mr Egan was willing to continue. Mr Speak proposed that he be re-appointed. Mr Thornton of the Amwell Society seconded. This was agreed *nem con*.

### **6. Election of Trustees**

The Officers were willing to continue. Messrs Hammerson, Bach, Eversden and Pickering were retiring by rotation and were also willing to continue.

David Trillo of the Islington Society proposed a motion to re-elect the Officers and Trustees *en bloc*. John Living of the Mill Hill Preservation Society seconded. The motion was carried *nem con*.

The Chairman noted that the number of trustees was at the minimum permitted by the Constitution. The Chairman appealed to representatives whether they wished to put themselves forward and if they could please consider after the meeting whether there was anyone in a member society or anyone they knew that they would like to nominate to the London Forum's Executive Committee (of Trustees), or to its committee dealing with planning, housing, environment and transport. The Executive Committee met once every six to eight weeks, except in August, and did much of its communication by email.

Helen Marcus added that it was very rewarding for Trustees to see the workings at the heart of government and to meet officials and politicians. Without her involvement in Newsforum it would not have been a very onerous requirement. Diane Burrige also explained how interesting and rewarding she had found her role as a London Forum trustee.

The Chairman clarified that no specific skills beyond the grassroots knowledge were required to be a Trustee, unlike for the members of the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee.

The Chairman thanked all members for their support and those in the London Forum's teams for their work and commitment.

Diane Burridge expressed her gratitude to the Chairman, the Trustees and other Officers, and asked members to remember how powerful they were together, with over a hundred societies and thousands of members.

## **7. Other Business**

The Pinner Society asked how many underlying members the member Societies had in total. Mr Thornton responded that the best estimate was on the order of 100,000 individuals.

The Chairman noted that many member societies also had several affiliated residents' associations and their own membership would be considerable.

The formal AGM concluded at approximately 7.10 p.m.