

Minutes of the AGM held October 2015 of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

The Chairman, Peter Eversden, presented London Forum's annual report July 2014 to June 2015. He explained the fight London Forum had had in opposing the Government's permitted development of conversion of offices to flats which had harmed London's economy and caused eviction of thriving businesses, voluntary groups and small and emerging enterprises. Remaining offices are in short supply, particularly in Central London - deterring new businesses, and the lack of commercial floor space has increased rents considerably which affects profits and hence investment. Homes delivered by conversion are not always the type needed locally and no affordable housing or financial contributions have been able to be secured by Councils for such conversions.

Following the election in May 2015, London Forum had been developing relationships with MPs. The aim is to ensure that those representing all parts of London and those on relevant Select Committees and All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) for various topics have the evidence they need to scrutinise and modify Bills and policies and to give informed speeches in the House and challenge Ministers. It is fortunate that two people very experienced in boroughs became MPs - Helen Hayes and Catherine West - who will be able to bring relevant knowledge to the Commons and its committees.

Mr Eversden said that the Outer London Commission, of which he had been a member for six years, had been set the task by Boris Johnson of examining the barriers to housing delivery, the options for growth, the densification of town centres and of outer London and the relationships with local authorities in the wider south-east. That will be in preparation for the new London Plan expected in 2019, based on the policies of the new Mayor. The delay in replacing the current plan will cause problems due to the way the current policies were being applied.

London Forum cannot see how the number of homes that are affordable and of the type Londoners need will be delivered. Changes in freedoms and facilities are needed for boroughs to build homes again. The report by the Finance Commission, chaired by one of our Patrons, Tony Travers, on devolution to London and funding has had little Government response but there was a Devolution Bill before Parliament.

The London Forum accounts showed a surplus for the year of £3,981, due largely to a bequest of £3,000 from Mr Bernard Selwyn; subscription income had been lower than expected, due to teething troubles with the new system of payments - this had largely been made good after the 30th June end of the Forum's accounting period. There was therefore no proposal before the meeting for an increase in subscriptions. But to keep the Forum financially sound an increase might be necessary for 2016-17.

Approval of the Annual Report and Accounts was proposed by David Bieda (The Seven Dials Trust) and seconded by Caroline Brook (Kew Society), and approved unanimously.

Mr Egan was reappointed Independent Examiner.

No nomination for the post of President had been received; the position remained in abeyance. There had been no nominations of alternative candidates for the posts of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, nor for the Executive Committee places held by Mr Eversden, Mr Hammerson, Mr Linskey and Mrs Marcus who stand down in 2015 and all were willing to continue; they were re-elected en bloc on the proposal of Mike Allsop (Strawberry Hill Residents Association), seconded by Jan Morgan (Highgate Society).

The Chairman expressed appreciation for the support of members and sought additional people to volunteer for London Forum's Planning and Transport Committee.

Mr Ball said there should be more recognition of the contribution of independent, personal members.

The meeting thanked the Chairman for his continuing work and leadership. The Chairman thanked the officers and committee members for their work over the year. Mrs Marcus thanked societies for contributing articles to News Forum. Mrs Harvey thanked Mr Tyler for his work on the media awards.

E N D