

Minutes of a meeting of the Herne Hill Society Committee

held on Tuesday 4 February 2020 at 7:30 PM at Herne Hill United Church

1. Welcome and apologies

The meeting was attended by Colin Wight (CW), Chair; Laurence Marsh (LM), Vice-Chair; Martyn Hall (MH), Treasurer; Val Suebsaeng (VS), Membership Secretary; Henry Ferguson (HF); Annie Gelly (AG); Dave Gelly (DG); Jackie Plumridge (JP); Pat Roberts (PR), Secretary.

2. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

It was confirmed that the outstanding contribution towards the cost of last year's Thomas Lynn Bristowe Memorial Lecture had now been received from Brockwell Park Community Partners.

The annual stocktaking of Society publications had been completed. The value for accounting purposes will, as usual, be based on the cover price.

MH confirmed that he would shortly be contacting an independent person to scrutinise the 2019 accounts. Action: MH

Room bookings for future meetings had been confirmed, but MH would request confirmation by email. Whatever the make-up of the next committee and the issues they faced, meetings, and therefore room bookings, would be necessary, so committee meeting dates should be booked for the rest of the calendar year - though not public meetings, except for the AGM in March. Action: MH [done]

3. The Future of the Society

CW, LM and PR updated the committee on recent meetings with individuals who had offered to help, in the aftermath of the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 13 November 2019 at the Herne Hill Baptist Church.

A meeting was held on 28 January with two of the individual members who had expressed willingness to help at the EGM in November, plus another person who had come forward separately. The available options were discussed: none was ruled out, but there were preferences for some sort of consolidation with the

Herne Hill Forum, if they were open to the idea; or a rapid recruitment drive that might attract some new members willing to join the committee. In any case, there was a further emphasis on the need for local, authoritative scrutiny of town planning applications - an activity which was central to the Society's objectives and which no other group (including the Forum) had the resources to manage. A follow-up meeting with one of the participants was to be held on 5 February.

Given that a majority of members who had expressed an opinion were content for the Committee to explore possible mergers with a neighbouring society, a separate cordial meeting was held on 31 January with the Chair and Secretary of the Dulwich Society. They said that, following consultations with their own committee, the Dulwich Society felt that an amalgamation with the Herne Hill Society would not be appropriate. They valued their cooperation with us, and hoped it would continue, but did not have the resources to take on an extensive new commitment (and one that straddles two boroughs), particularly as they were already looking to be much more active on behalf of the community of East Dulwich as well as their more traditional neighbourhoods.

Thirdly, there had been informal contacts with the chair of the Herne Hill Forum which will be followed up in further meetings later in the month. The Forum was in principle willing to discuss the idea of some sort of amalgamation with the Society, in step with its own planned transition to a different charitable format (potentially, a *Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)*ⁱ), but there would be issues to be negotiated. In any event, nothing could be concluded, or even agreed, before the Society's AGM in March. However, such a coming together of two complementary bodies (possibly supported by the useful funds that the Society could bring to such a new endeavour) might theoretically offer an opportunity to create something new, positive and more future-proof - although whatever new arrangements might be available, to be effective they would still need the active and energetic support of individual officers and committee members and/or activists and so far no such candidates had emerged.

4. Preparations for AGM on Wednesday 11 March

CW outlined how he thought the agenda might proceed, and how he would present his candidature (under the conditions he has previously outlined). Ahead of that

event, he would remind members by email that anyone wanting to join the committee should make themselves known well in advance. What would happen if a candidate for the Chairmanship stood against CW? How might this affect current committee members? Should the whole committee stand as one slate? How many candidates should figure on the slate, bearing in mind the Constitution's rules on quorum?

The options were debated at length, against the background that neither the members, nor the current committee, nor even any potential new candidates for the committee, would be able to predict how things might develop and conclude over the coming months of 2020 or beyond.

In conclusion, it was agreed that a written "manifesto" should be prepared for the AGM (and possibly circulated to members in advance?) outlining clearly the conditions under which current officers and other committee members would be standing for election, and the options available to the Society going forward (including our thoughts about the future of the Magazine), reflecting any discussions that might take place in the interim and with the overriding aim of preserving the key features of the Society. Action: PR to initiate a draft for circulation around the Committee, and in due course to present at the AGM.

5. Subscriptions in 2020

VS reported that she had logged 25 membership renewals so far this year and three new members.

Renewals by SO would be logged as they were received according to our bank statements.

At this stage the Society already had roughly 200 members.

MH proposed that, if winding up was a strong possibility, members who paid by Standing Order should be invited, later in the year, to cancel their S/Os. Action: PR to add to Issues Log [done]

6. Small Grants Scheme

Held over until a future meeting.

7. WWI Memorial at 7th Day Adventist Church

The recent satisfactory meeting was reported.

8. Society publications

Nothing to report.

8. Any other business

MH reported on the 2019 income and expenditure and other figures, which showed a satisfactory position.

9. Next meeting

Tuesday 3 March.

ⁱ For explanation of CIOs see <http://tinyurl.com/tg4cbee>