

## **Minutes of the 2012 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the LONDON FORUM OF AMENITY AND CIVIC SOCIETIES**

- held 6.30pm, 17th October 2012, at 77 Cowcross Street, London EC1

**Present:** Approximately 30 people

**Apologies:** These were received from:

Patrons: Dame Jennifer Jenkins, Alan Baxter and Tony Travers.

Vice Presidents: Bill Tyler, Harley Sherlock and David Lewis.

Member societies: Andrew Bosi of the Islington Society; Peter Pickering of the Finchley Society; Gaby Higgs of the St Maryebone Society; Tony Hillier of the Heath and Hampstead Society; Ruth Boff of the Pinner Association; John Mercer of the Bexley Civic Society; Nick Jeffrey of Culverley Green Residents Association; David Wood of Beckenham Civic Society and June Stubbs of Thorney Island Society.

The Chairman, Peter Eversden, opened the meeting introducing the President of the London Forum, Sir Richard MacCormac, and the Chair of the Planning and Transport Committee of the London Forum, Michael Bach. He welcomed the representatives of the Societies present, especially new members.

### **1. President's welcome and introduction:**

Sir Richard said that the work of the London Forum is of increasing importance, thanks in large part to the commitment of Peter Eversden to the Forum over the past 16 years. The London Forum does not concern itself with politics but with Government proposals and acts, voicing concerns from member societies around London.

Sir Richard continued by commenting on the need for an appropriate density when planning housing developments. High density development, achieved by high rise small apartments, excluded many families due to both cost and lack of space. Such developments led to a transient occupation in buy-to-let properties. This matter would be discussed in more detail during the Open Discussion session.

### **2. Minutes of the AGM of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011:**

The Chairman introduced the Minutes of the 2011 AGM and asked for any comments. In the absence of comments he proposed the acceptance of the Minutes. These were agreed, *nem con*.

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

The Chairman reported on the activities of the London Forum in the past year. He thanked the Patrons for their support, and Helen Marcus and Peter Pickering for compiling the Annual Report, already circulated, which reflected a lot of work by many people during the year. This work was also reported more fully in Newsforum, edited to a very high standard by Helen Marcus. He also referred to Planning in London which he advocated as an important journal on London planning matters.

Close up

While the London Forum received some free copies for circulation to members he suggested that Societies could subscribe for copies to support the journal in its work.

The Chairman continued with comments on important current topics.

The Coalition Government had launched an onslaught on **use provisions and consents**. In response, the London Forum had strengthened its links with London MPs to try to make Government Departments understand the harm that is being done by their actions, and the Forum provides information to Select Committees on this. For example, the conversion of older office buildings to high cost flats. This deprives start-up small businesses of the low-cost office space they need in their early days.

The Mayor's **London Plan** is still in progress with alterations. The London Forum's comments on the alterations led to the Inspector inviting the Forum to participate in the Examination -in -Public. The GLA regards the Forum as a "stakeholder group", so we can be involved at the draft stage of proposals. The Chairman had continued with membership of the **Outer London Commission** and the Final Report was in preparation. The Mayor's Outer London Town Centre Rejuvenation Fund had 43 "special areas", more than the GLA "outline" frameworks.

**Local decision making** would be a very important area for local society action in future. Local Development Plans must be monitored as too few are yet in place (below 50%). If there is no local plan in place any planning application is automatically allowable. The London Plan should override this as it is in the form of a local plan. However local case officers have been known to reject the London Plan as a "material issue". Excessive density of housing, basement developments and BT cabinets are also contentious matters, and some Boroughs have not developed sufficient policies to control these. (For example, Open Reach cabinets can be up to 50 metres from the existing cabinet.)

**Open Meetings** for members, and any other interested participants, had been held throughout the year, with good attendance and participation. The Chairman recorded the Forum's great thanks to Alan Baxter for his

generosity in providing office space and the use of the Gallery. This enabled the Forum to hold meetings and network with the many other residents of the building involved in planning and kindred matters. The recent installation of a comprehensive audio-visual system in the Gallery had already proved very useful.

The Forum carried out a **Survey of member societies** to identify their interests and concerns, so that the Forum Committee could plan its activities to suit members. The results of the latest Survey were now available. The **website** is being rebuilt after the former host "scrapped" the old one, and the **Twitter** system is being used to spread information on live issues quickly and widely.

#### **4. Financial Report:**

The Treasurer had prepared the Financial Report but had been called away from London at the last minute. The Chairman summarised the Report. Income was just enough. Subscriptions had not been increased in previous years despite inflation and this was unwise, so an increase had been essential to meet rising costs. However Societies could compare our subscription with the subscription to Civic Voice (*circa* £500). Several donations were acknowledged and welcomed.

The website and Survey had been major costs in the same year but were very worthwhile. The Balance Sheet was healthy but we would not be able to undertake more than one major activity or action, such as a legal review, without expending all our reserves.

#### **5. Approval of Annual Report and Accounts for 2011/12:**

The Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder from paid-up members for the motion to approve the Annual Report and Accounts for 2011/12. Moved to approve by Rowena Lowe of the Tewksbury Lodge Estate Residents Association and seconded by Steven Russell of the Penge Forum. The motion was passed *nem con*.

#### **6. Election of Honorary Independent Examiner:**

The Chairman reported that the Treasurer, Tony Hillier, asked that Simon Baddeley be elected as Honorary Independent Examiner and asked for a seconder for a motion to this effect. Judith Hillman, Vice President, seconded the motion which was passed *nem con*.

#### **7. Election of Officers and Trustees:**

The Chairman then reported that four members of the Executive Committee retired by rotation and were willing to stand for election. Each had been formally nominated: Peter Eversden, Michael Hammerson, Bill Linskey and Helen Marcus. No other nominations had been received. A motion to elect the four nominees *en bloc* was proposed by William Davies of Gidea Park Society and seconded by Rosemary Pettitt of the Hammersmith Society. This was passed *nem con*.

Peter Eversden stated that he was happy to continue as Chairman of the Executive Committee (EC); the other members the EC would be Tony Allen, Treasurer, Michael Bach, Chairman Planning and Transport Committee, Derek Chandler, Secretary, Helen Marcus, Editor Newsforum, Haydn Mylchreest, Membership Secretary, Peter Pickering, Minutes Secretary, Diane Burridge, Michael Hammerson, Martin Jones and Bill Linskey. Two vice-presidents were co-opted to the EC, Marion Harvey and Bill Tyler. (Roger Chapman has recently resigned from the Committee due to commitments for his society.)

The Chairman thanked the EC for their work and support, observing that there were vacancies for anyone interested in participating.

The Chairman then referred to the major Committee of the Forum, the Planning and Transport Committee, chaired by Michael Bach, which did a great deal of work on these topics throughout the year. The Chairman thanked Michael Bach and all the members of this committee.

Michael Hammerson attended various heritage bodies on behalf of the Forum while Helen Marcus had attended GLA Committees and been a Trustee of Civic Voice.

The Chairman emphasised the need for new members to fill vacancies on the EC and P&T. Membership did not involve attendance at numerous meetings as much was dealt with by e-mail. The London Forum receives invitations to meetings of other bodies which give opportunities to increase interests and provide useful feedback to the local society. The Survey revealed many people with skills and interests useful to the Forum- those present were asked to prompt them to contact the Committee, as they would be most welcome.

#### **8. Any Other Business:**

Marion Harvey expressed thanks to Peter Eversden for his excellent running of the London Forum. Peter thanked Marion, saying that she had set a high standard for him. He then closed the AGM at 7.30pm, explaining that there would now be an open discussion and time for refreshments.