

LONDON FORUM OF AMENITY AND CIVIC SOCIETIES

2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



12 OCTOBER 2023 6.30pm at The Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EL

Draft Minutes

Present: Ben Derbyshire, President; Tony Travers, Patron; Peter Eversden, Chair, and representatives of:

Amwell Society, Barnet Society, Barnet Residents Association, BermondseyStreet.London, Brockley Society, Camden Society, Dulwich Society, Ealing Fields Residents Association, Ealing Matters, Finchley Society, Hammersmith Society, Highbury Community Association, Highgate Society, Islington Society, Kensington Society, Kew Society, Ladywell Society, Penge Forum, Richmond Society, Romford Civic Society, Southgate Society, Stamford Brook Residents Association, Sydenham Society and Westcombe Society

Apologies for Absence had been received from Nicky Gavron, Vice President and Balham Society, Battersea Society, Brixton Society, Enfield Society, Friends of Jubilee Gardens, Fulham Society, Greenwich Society, John Innes Society, Mortlake and East Sheen Society, Seven Dials Trust, Shad Thames Society, Southwark Planning Network, Teddington Society, Telegraph Hill Society, Thorney Island Society and Wandsworth Society

1 Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

2 Minutes of the 12 October 2022 Meeting

The minutes had been placed on the London Forum website. No changes had been suggested and they were approved *nem con*.

3 Chair's Report

The Chair referred to the Annual Report, which had been posted on the website, and said it described in detail what London Forum had been doing in the year 2022-23. He thanked the London Forum team and member societies for their input during the year.

He reported that the year 2022-23 had been one of the toughest years due to handling so many different topics at the same time. London Forum had sought changes in the LURB bill as described in Insights, most importantly in challenging how the proposed approach to local plans would work in London where there is already the London Plan, as an intermediate level. Peers forced debate, consultation and votes on a number of topics and we wait for Parliament to resume to see how all that works its way to a conclusion.

The Chair reminded the meeting about the importance of member societies' experience being shared across the membership and asked as many as possible to email their newsletters to newsletter@londonforum.org.uk

The Chair commented on the receipt in June 2023, after a long wait, of some of the London Plan guidance documents, on design coding, the development of small sites and the intensification of

land use. He reminded member societies that London Forum had arranged a November meeting (online) to hear more about how the GLA expects this guidance to be used by local authorities and hoped as many as possible would join in.

The Chair expressed concern that the London Mayor had not yet published annual monitoring reports for any of the last four years making it impossible to know whether any of the London Plan policies were having the desired effect. The development of the next London Plan can only start after the next GLA/Mayoral elections. London Forum had been developing good relations with Assembly members on the GLA Planning and Regeneration Committee in readiness.

A recent survey reported that 50% of people who work in local authorities feel their teams are understaffed. The government has offered local authorities help to recruit more people to their planning teams and to pay for consultants to enable the sought for new Local Plans to be developed. The Chair expressed frustration that consultants are considered before local people who also have a lot to contribute. He recalled the community-developed Brentford Town Plan which went on to be adopted by the local authority.

The Chair invited the meeting to join him in feeling pride for all that London Forum has done and achieved. He thanked London Forum trustees and members of the Planning, Environment & Transport committee for all their hard work.

4 Financial Report

The Treasurer presented the financial report for 2022-23 as shown in the Annual Report. On the income side, he drew attention to subscription income having stayed flat (London Forum lost a few members and gained a few) and to the major donation c£4000, not cash, but in kind. It was the value of the free space and facilities provided to London Forum by Alan Baxter. It had no net effect on the accounts because the same figure was also recorded as an expense, but was a healthy reminder of expenses London Forum would otherwise have to expect to incur.

On the expenditure side, the Treasurer drew attention to several items significantly larger than the previous year. The first was a fee of nearly £2000 paid to a consultant who helped London Forum with the strategy review. The second was a donation to Civic Voice of £1000 to help in the aftermath of a fraud suffered by them during the pandemic. The third was the cost of developing the new website, which he duly unveiled, inviting all to visit it, try it out and report any problems.

As a result, total expenditure exceeded income during the year and London Forum had dipped into its reserves, which now stand at c£36000. The funds are spread across a number of banks to reduce risk.

The Treasurer reported that Miles Storey, Independent Examiner, had reviewed the accounts and recorded his thanks for that input. He reported that Miles Storey had agreed to continue in the role, which the meeting would come to later in the agenda.

There was a question from a member as to what London Forum intended to do with its reserves and suggesting trustees should consider reducing the membership subscription for societies. Other possible uses suggested included additional benefits for members and funding research on cross-London topics e.g. the number of unoccupied dwellings in London. The Chair added that the London Forum needs to keep funds available in case, in future, it has to pay for office and meeting space. The need to reduce subscriptions was challenged by a trustee who reported that there had been a lot of other feedback that the subscription rates were already too low.

The Treasurer agreed to take the points into consideration. He then made an appeal for someone with experience from a member society to come forward to take over as Treasurer, as he expected to have to step down in the next few years. The Chair echoed the appeal for a new Treasurer.

5 Approval of Annual Report and Accounts for 2022-23

Approval was proposed by Mary Hogben of Finchley Society and seconded by Jane Maggs of the Southgate Society and passed *nem con*.

6 Appointment of Honorary Independent Examiner

Re-appointment of Miles Storey, Treasurer of the Westcombe Society, as Independent Examiner for London Forum was proposed by Stephen Speak of the Kew Society and seconded by Paul Thornton of the Amwell Society and passed *nem con*.

7 Election of Trustees and Officers

The Chair reported that all existing officers had expressed themselves willing to continue in office and that the four trustees coming up for re-election were also willing to stand again. He therefore proposed that they should be elected *en bloc*. This was proposed by Gordon Massey of the Barnet Residents Association and seconded by Andrew Bosi of the Islington Society and passed *nem con*.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Request for Resources

The Secretary outlined the actions underway following the strategy review. The review had confirmed that London Forum was indeed focusing on the topics, planning broadly defined, that member societies want, but the review indicated ways in which the work could be done more effectively.

One action resulting from that was to formation of a Member Service Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chair to coordinate across all communications, publications and meetings. In the future that might include commissioned research. This committee requested members from member societies to act as a **Voice for members** on the committee.

A second action was a skills survey of trustees which clearly indicated a shortfall in IT skills. London Forum is therefore keen to hear from a member of a member society who could bring **IT skills to the Trustee body**.

A third action was the development of a buddying plan, where trustees were paired up to be able to become familiar with another's role and be ready to help with the work or take over if required. In order to complete this plan, London Forum needs members of member societies to step forward who have **experience of acting as an officer of a charity, especially Secretary**.

The Chair remarked trustees and committee members of London Forum are involved in many interesting subjects in their work, but it is also fun and there are benefits in terms e.g. of free access to NLA meetings and reports.

There was no further other business.