



THE BEACONSFIELD SOCIETY

celebrating the past, promoting the present and influencing the future

Minutes of the Annual General meeting for the year 2016-2017 held in the Fitzwilliams Centre, Windsor End, HP9 2JW on Friday 10 November 2017 starting at 7.30 pm

Present: The following Committee members and some 50 members and guests were present: President, Les Davies; Chairman, Mike Elliott; Secretary, Laurence Smaje; Treasurer, Graeme Richards, Kari Dorme, Nanu Hodson, Debbie Marsden and co-opted member Douglas Butterfield.

1. Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed our Patron, Dominic Grieve, members and guests and said that because our Patron was committed to another meeting in Marlow at 8.30 pm we had decided to hold our AGM after his talk, rather than before as is usual.

2. Address by the Patron, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP

Dominic dealt first with the national political situation, which he described as a 'most disturbed political period' with a wide lack of confidence in political institutions. This worried him as it corrodes democracy and can lead to non democratic alternatives.' Brexit' drives most of this and the marginally greater vote for 'Leave' has divided the country into most unfortunate opposition, both generational and educational. The Government, meanwhile feels obliged to implement the popular choice leaving no time to deal with major issues of concern to the public - policing, the state of the roads, the NHS and the housing crisis etc. none of which will go away while the Government grapples with a very uncertain future. The time scale is also very short compared with that taken by other countries when negotiating complex trade deals, such as the 7 years taken by Canada to do so with the EU.

Having said all that, Dominic pointed out that it is not all gloom and doom: we are not at war with anyone at the moment, 600,00 families who had no working member, now have one and growth, while low, still remains positive.

Turning to local issues, he said that 90% of his letters from constituents were about planning issues. The Local Plan generates much concern but the country has a major housing crisis as house building has not kept up with housing requirements. Government targets will not change and there is going to be inevitable change in communities around the country, including South Buckinghamshire. There are no more 'brownfield sites in and around Beaconsfield for example, so the alternatives are releasing Greenbelt land or providing higher density housing. Neither alternative is popular with the local community but it has to make a choice.

Coming to specifics, Dominic said he had held a positive attitude to the Inland Homes' original outline application for the development of Wilton Park, but he was opposed to their

recent full application claiming that the development could not justify provision of any affordable homes.

Finally, he said that Local Councils had little authority over backland development and, at least in part because of Government cuts, they had insufficient money to deal with weeds in pavements and potholes in roads and he encouraged the local community to take more responsibility for those issues they can control such as removing litter etc.

The session was then opened up to questions, which covered the provision of the proposed common building to house the two General Practices in the Town, when would we have a decision on Unitary vs Local Authorities and why was it that the Referendum was said to be advisory and the Government has treated it as obligatory? Dominic was confident that the issue of the two General Practices would soon be solved and would provide an expanded service, Bucks was second in the queue for the decision on local authorities and a convincing explanation was given as to why the Government acted as if the referendum were obligatory.

The Chairman then thanked our Patron for his talk and open session and hoped that he would not be too late for his appointment in Marlow.

The President, Les Davies, then opened the Annual General Meeting whose Minutes follow.

2. Apologies for absence.

Jeanette Buckle, John Burton, Anita Cranmer, Rachel Ferguson, Sandy Saunders, Will Story and Alison Wheelhouse.

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These were proposed as a correct record by Debbie Marsden and Seconded by Nanu Hodson and approved by the general membership.

5. Matters not covered in the Agenda.

No matters were raised

6. Chairman's report

The Chairman opened his report by saying that during the year, progress had been made on each aspect of the Society's Mission Statement – *Celebrating the past, promoting the present and influencing the future*. We held a week celebrating the life and work of Beaconsfield author, Alison Uttley which was enhanced by our splendid new Display Boards on the WH Smith wall in Maxwell Road. These were purchased through a generous donation from the previous Beaconsfield Independent Electors Association and the programme is curated creatively by Deirdre Smaje. Our Heritage visit this year was to Hall Barn and a capacity group were treated to a most interesting visit around the house conducted by the owner, the Hon Jenefer Farncombe.

As for the present, we have been providing coffee and cakes to traders and visitors to the Saturday Farmer's Markets organised by Judy McDonnell and Jackie Dawes and assisted by Committee members. Our main event was Beaconsfield Now, where local not for profit organisations showcase their work. This year, the intrepid organisers Debbie Marsden and Nanu Hodson moved the venue to the Rugby Club where there is more space and, following an extensive social media campaign, we attracted nearly 1000 visitors. Splendid weather also may have helped! Our media presence has been greatly expanded and includes a new Website, and active Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. This initiative has been spearheaded by Peter Foster and we currently have more than 1500 followers on Facebook, nearly 800 on Twitter and more than 100 on Instagram. The main purpose of this was to reach as large a section of the Town as possible and it was assumed that this would be largely to younger groups. To our surprise, however, the statistics showed that 24% of users were aged between 18 and 35, 18% were 36-44 and 67% were 45 and over! What was less surprising was that nearly two thirds were female. This year, for the first time, we helped with the Summer Fayre held on August Bank Holiday Monday. Our role was to manage the car park in the grounds of Beaconsfield School where we also had a stand promoting the Society.

The future holds many challenges, planning and parking in particular. We are fortunate to have Alison Wheelhouse on our Committee who is an expert in planning law and has been very helpful in guiding our comments on the complex issues of the Local Plan and the Wilton Park development. We have also established good relations with Thames Valley Police who are now booking people parking illegally on pavements and on corners blocking sight lines. The A355 relief road has been approved and work is due to start in 2018 and the Society supports this insofar as it will help keep HS2 traffic out of the Town.

The chairman finished his report by thanking the President, Les Davies and Vice President, Sandy Saunders for their wise counsel but said there was one person he wished to thank in particular. This was Laurence Smaje who had served the Society as its Secretary and worked on its behalf diligently for 6 years, one year more than that specified in the Constitution. However, because of the merger with BOTRA last year it was agreed that it would be helpful in smoothing the details of working together if the Secretary were to remain in post for a further year.

7. Treasurer's Report

The approved accounts had been tabled and the Treasurer summarised the main issues which were that our receipts for membership subscriptions, donations and sponsorship were all increased substantially, but then so were payments actual or anticipated. Nevertheless, this year's surplus was greater than that last year and he was able to state that the finances were healthy and he anticipated that, provided the Society's membership continued to grow and additional external funds continued to be available, we should be able to continue our increased activity in fulfilling our mission.

There were no questions and Deirdre Smaje proposed and Peter Foster seconded the motion that the accounts be accepted and this was approved by the members present.

8. Election of Officers and Committee

The President took the Chair for the election of the Chairman. There was only one nomination, namely the present Chairman who has now served for 5 years, as specified in the Constitution. The President argued, however that the reason that Laurence Smaje was permitted to serve for 6 years applied equally to the Chairman's position with the addition that it is unwise to change both Chairman and Secretary at the same time. This was accepted by those present and Laurence Smaje proposed that Mike Elliott be elected Chairman for a further year. This was seconded by Graeme Richards and approved by the members present.

The following nominations for the other officers and members of the committee were as follows:

Secretary, Rachel Ferguson: Treasurer, Graeme Richards

Other committee members: Jeanette Buckle, Douglas Butterfield, Kari Dorme, Nanu Hodson, Debbie Marsden and Alison Wheelhouse.

This motion was proposed by Les Davies and seconded by Laurence Smaje and carried unanimously by members present.

9. Any other Business

There were two questions from members.

Deborah Sanders asked who was responsible for editing the Society's social media. The Chairman responded by saying that there was a set of Guidelines approved by the Committee and difficult cases were brought to a committee chaired by him and composed of the following members, Jeanette Buckle, Peter Foster, Debbie Marsden and Alison Wheelhouse.

A vote of thanks was received from Sylvia Jones who said that the contribution of the Beaconsfield Society to the Summer Fayre was much appreciated by its Management Committee. The Chairman thanked her for this and said that the Society was pleased to be able to help.

The meeting was then closed and all those present were invited to enjoy light refreshments and chat to Committee members and indeed to each other.

Laurence Smaje
Secretary

