

Minutes of the 37th Annual General Meeting the BISHOP'S WALTHAM SOCIETY held via Zoom at 7.30 pm on 17th February 2022

Treasurer Keith Fry welcomed members to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He explained that unfortunately our Chairman Tony Kippenberger is not able to join the meeting as he is in hospital recovering from an operation on his foot. Tony is very sorry not to be here in person, but members will be able to see him a little later as we'll be showing a recording of him giving his talk on "Taper Burn Marks". Keith said he was sure that the members would want him to send good wishes to Tony for a speedy recovery and he will get in touch with Jacky Kippenberger to ask her to do that on behalf of all of us when she next visits Tony. The number of screens joining the Zoom call was 36 which gives an approximate figure of 65 members attending. Keith reminded participants that, as with last year's meeting, there is no active participation by members and that all motions have been proposed, seconded and voted on in advance.

APOLOGIES for absence were received from Liz Vince.

MINUTES of the 36th AGM having been circulated to members via email and post, together with the agenda and voting forms; Keith confirmed that no-one had raised any queries on the Minutes.

The motion that "The minutes of the 36th AGM are a true and accurate reflection of the Meeting" had been voted on, both electronically and by postal vote. It was proposed by Emma McKenzie and seconded by Sarah Berry. Apart from one abstention, all votes received were in favour.

MATTERS ARISING from the minutes: there were no matters arising.

ADOPTION OF THE TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2021 having been circulated to members with the AGM papers: Keith Fry said it was with great sadness that we learned of the death in November 2021 of John Hayter, a founding member of the Society who had worked in many roles (Vice Chairman, Secretary, etc) in its early years. John will be remembered by many for his efforts in the planning arena and for his diligence in keeping the Society true to its origins and constitution. Keith added that he had attended John's funeral which was a very moving experience - it was obvious there was much love and affection for John within his family.

It was felt the decision to continue holding our meetings via Zoom seemed to be the right one in the light of the rise of the Omicron variant before Christmas. We appreciate this disadvantages some members, and we know there are people who are keen to return to face-to-face meetings. Equally, the Zoom meetings have been very popular with attendance of around 60-70 people at most events. However, now that Omicron seems to have passed its worst, we can imagine returning to face-to-face events in April. Keith confirmed that the Trustees will continue to deliberate this and will keep members informed. He reminded members that the full programme of events for 2022 is available on the website.

Keith said the Trustees are delighted that during 2021 the Society's membership grew by nearly 10%, however new members are always welcome so encouraged members to invite friends and neighbours to sample a talk or view our website.

Finally, Keith said he knew Tony would want to record his thanks to the Trustees - all volunteers giving their time and enthusiasm freely. We've co-opted two new Trustees this year - Mike Berry and Lindsay Edge - but we are always keen to add to our number, particularly anyone with an interest in, or knowledge of, Planning and asked members to get in touch if they are interested in becoming a Trustee.

No comments or queries had been received, so the adoption of the Trustees' Report was proposed by Mike Boyd and seconded by Justine Greenfield, with all votes received in favour.

ADOPTION OF FINANCIAL REPORT: The Treasurer's report had been circulated to members with the AGM papers. Keith commented that it was great to have new members joining the Society and that donations were continuing, albeit they were a little reduced. He said the Trustees had taken the decision to reduce the price of our publications on the basis we didn't want to be left with a large, out of date stock and he was happy to confirm that the book sales had increased.

He commented that the Trustees were keen to maintain our slot in the Church Hall diary for the third Thursday of each month and were concerned that if we did not reserve this, it may be lost as the Hall has to balance its books and it needs bookings to do that. We therefore decided to book these slots and to pay upfront for the year. This means we are paying for the hall as well as Zoom but the managers of the Hall have been very fair and give us a credit when we don't actually use the hall so the money isn't lost.

He went on to talk about the Special Projects Fund and explained that the Society is one of three sponsors of the event taking place in July 2022 to commemorate the signing of the Treaty of Waltham by Henry VIII and The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V which took place in the Palace in 1522. In order to ensure a charity is at the helm of the finances, the Special Projects Fund of BWS has become the “handling account” of the event. This means the balance of the Special Projects Fund is showing as £3,000 although this represents equal contributions from the Society, The Museum Trust and the Town Team who are effectively underwriting the celebration.

No comments or queries having been received, the adoption of the financial report was proposed by Penny Copeland and seconded by Jon Riches, with all votes received in favour.

AGREEMENT TO THE CONTINUATION OF EXISTING OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES IN OFFICE: Keith Fry commented that, as last year, it was proposed that the current Officers and Trustees remain in office until the 2023 AGM. Those involved have agreed to stay in post. This motion was proposed by Roy Birch and seconded by Malcolm Wearn, with votes received in favour.

APPOINTMENT OF THE EXAMINER OF THE SOCIETY’S ACCOUNTS: Keith Fry said that Paul Emmerson has been our Examiner for several years but reminded members that technically we do not need to appoint an examiner because our turnover doesn’t exceed £25,000. However, the Trustees are of the view that it is prudent for an independent examination to take place to ensure public confidence in the way the Society’s finances are managed. Keith thanked Paul Emmerson for his work on the accounts and said Paul has confirmed he is prepared to remain as examiner. The motion to re-appoint Paul as Examiner was proposed by Susan Tatton-Brown and seconded by Mike Rainey, with all votes received in favour.

MEMBERS’ FORUM - ANY OTHER BUSINESS: Keith confirmed that no matters had been raised by members under “Any Other Business” so he moved on to the final item.

CLOSING REMARKS ON BEHALF OF CHAIRMAN: Keith said again that Tony is very sorry not to be with us this evening but had wanted to make the following comments.

Charity donations: These are briefly covered in the Treasurer’s report, but we are pleased that we were able to continue making donations during the year including the hypothecation of our Gift Aid (meaning the Gift Aid payment we receive is given to worthy causes). In addition, donations were made as follows: Bishop’s Waltham in Bloom - £150; St Peter’s Church (Country Fayre) - £50; Start-up Fund for Henry VIII Commemoration Event - £1,000 (to be repaid if profits are made at the event in July 2022).

Rise in subscriptions in 2023: Since 2020 the Society has planned to raise subscription rates from £7 (single) and £12 (couple) to £10 and £16 respectively. The Trustees left this in abeyance for 2021 and 2022, but our proposal is that from January 2023 these new rates will apply. This will be the first increase since 2013 - ten years earlier - and reflects the increased cost of goods and services and the current and expected rise in inflation. The decision will be made in third quarter of 2022 to give members time to make the necessary bank changes!

Keith concluded the formal business of the evening by thanking members once again for attending.