

THE DOVER SOCIETY

Minutes of the 22nd Annual General Meeting, which was held on 19 April 2010
in St. Mary's Parish Centre, Dover

The meeting was opened by the Chairman, Mr Derek Leach, who welcomed members present

1). Apologies

Mr Leach read the names of those members who gave apologies.

2). Minutes

The minutes of the 21st meeting, held on 20th April 2009, which had been circulated were agreed as correct. Proposed by Mr Jack Woolford, seconded by John Turnpenny, 3).

3)

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4). The Chairman

Mr Leach presented his 6th report to the members of the Dover Society. He began his report by asking members to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect for those members who had died during the last year:

(Names from Derek).

Mr Leach commented that this was his sixth annual report to the Society, which had been one of the busiest for the Executive.

Membership - Regrettably there has been a net drop in membership in the past year from around 450 to 425. Whilst this is still a healthy number, it does not compare with Harwich, a similar-sized town, where its Society's membership is 1800. The more members we have, the stronger our voice becomes. So please encourage relatives, friends and work colleagues to join. He thanked the membership secretary, Sheila Cope, for her work during the year.

Civic Trust - Something of a bombshell was the financial failure of the Civic Trust, which has provided a national voice for amenity societies for many years. The Executive has had to consider the purpose and financing of a successor organisation called Civic Voice, looking for a much smaller outfit concentrating upon providing a national voice rather than supporting local societies like the Dover Society that are very much self sufficient. An Executive motion regarding membership of Civic Voice will be discussed later in the meeting.

Planning - The Planning Committee under its tireless chairman, Mr Jack Woolford, continues to monitor and comment upon every planning application for Dover and the surrounding villages. Mr Leach reported that progress on providing a new health facility, the long-awaited redevelopment of Buckland Paper Mill and the St James' area - DTIZ - was still awaited. The big screen in Market Square proved to be as ugly and as intrusive as feared and has yet to attract an audience of any size. Another controversy was the bid put together for Dover by SEEDA, KCC, DDC, DHB and EH for grants under the Sea Change programme to improve coastal resorts. No consultation was held until grants had been received ring-fenced for specific projects, which had to be match-funded locally. These included refurbishment of the Bleriot Memorial, the expensive and grand furnishing of Dover Castle's keep, a new reception building for the castle, renovating the officers' mess, a feasibility study for a cable car project and yet another improvement to the sea front. The Executive Committee

objected to spending £2m on what is already an attractive promenade in front of Waterloo Crescent when so much of the town centre is in desperate need of a facelift. The money could not however be spent anywhere else.

Concerned about the cost effectiveness of the Dover District Council (DDC) wind turbine at Whitfield, the Executive discovered that it will take 55 years to recover the capital and running costs. Concern was expressed to DDC for closing two of Dover's public toilets without warning in its attempt to transfer the cost to Dover Town Council (DTC), and which were subsequently reopened. DDC's Local Development Framework for the years to 2026 was approved by Government, and includes 14,000 new homes in the District and an expectation of 6,500 new jobs. The Society welcomed the occupation of large empty premises by Peacock and Morrison, but remain despondent about the 26 empty premises between Townwall Street and the Town Hall.

The unauthorised enclosure of some land, including an established public right of way, has resulted in the Executive taking steps to protect the path. A motion to that effect will be put to the meeting later.

Considering the Society's response to the formal proposals by DHB for redevelopment of the Western Docks (called T2) and for restructuring of the Harbour Board took up a great deal of time in the last three months. These proposals were considered so important that members were consulted by post (at a cost of £170) about the Executive's recommendations before finalising the submissions to the Secretary of State at the end of March. Mr Leach thanked all those members who commented. The Society had agreed in principle the Western Docks T2 development with certain provisos, most of which have already been met. The formal submission to the Secretary of State confirmed the Society's support but with a number of conditions. Regarding restructuring of the Board, the Executive covered all possibilities. Whilst preferring to retain the status quo (ie Trust Port status), it considered this unrealistic in the present economic climate with any Government looking to reduce public borrowing and the need for the DHB to borrow money for T2 development without increasing the national debt. In this case, the Executive suggested an amended Trust Port status with the ability to borrow money without increasing the national debt and enabling the Board to support the local community financially via a charitable trust. If the government opted for privatisation, then the Society's preference was for retaining a 51% share in the new company with a number of provisos which applied equally to 100% privatisation, including guaranteed income for a charitable trust managed by and for the community and an employee share scheme.

Initiatives - Frustrated with the state of the town centre with its empty and boarded up shops, litter, cycling in the pedestrian precinct and other antisocial behaviour, the Executive formed a Refurbishment Committee, which has quickly identified targets for lobbying and improvement. English Heritage is undertaking a survey of Dover's buildings to review listed buildings and whether other buildings should be listed. The Refurbishment Committee is conducting its own review.

Following an unsuccessful attempt by Society member, Martyn Webster, to have the Copt Hill cemeteries listed by English Heritage, the Executive is now investigating the possibility of a conservation area instead and possibly listing some of the headstones. The Society is to place one of its blue plaques on St. Mary's Parish Centre overlooking the Churchyard, where all trace of the grave of Thomas Pattenden, a Dover diarist, was removed in the 1990s. Efforts continue regarding the refurbishment of the 20 historic panels around the town, some of which are in desperate need. DTC has agreed to pay for three while the Society will

pay for another - about £400 each. The Society will be working to raise awareness of the neglected Roman remains in the town in the coming months.

Consultation - The Dover Society continues to be consulted on a range of topics by DDC, DTC, the Chamber of Commerce and DHB. Mr Leach said that the Society welcomed the enthusiasm of the mayor, member Sue Jones, for Executive proposals to restore the Town Hall, where a joint approach to provide guided tours to raise public awareness of the building has been discussed. The Executive has agreed in principle to the possible erection on the Western Heights of a memorial to the 1,700,000 commonwealth troops from 54 countries who died in both world wars. During consultation about the state of some retail properties between Bridge Street and Beaconsfield Road, it was agreed that conversion to residential use would be a significant improvement. The Executive has also been consulted about a major project to regenerate Ostend's East Bank with an interpretation centre and monument to the 1918 Zeebrugge Raid.

Mr Leach then turned to the regular activities, which are part and parcel of The Society and perhaps taken for granted, but no less important.

Social programme - The winter series of meetings continue to be well supported and Mr Leach thanked Patricia Sherratt, Jack Woolford, Georgette Rapley and the happy band of kitchen helpers - not to mention the wine waiter - for all their hard work. However, he felt that, once again, support for most of the summer outings was disappointing, and as a result there would only be one organised for the coming summer.

Projects - Regular working parties at Cowgate Cemetery, led by Jeremy Cope, continue to keep the whole cemetery attractive as a haven for wildlife and for people, both living and dead. There is always a warm welcome to new workers. The Society continues to play a leading role in the River Dour Steering Group, and continues to coordinate and publicise arrangements for Dover properties to be open free of charge on a weekend in September under the national Heritage Open Days umbrella. Increasing every year, St Radigund's Abbey was added in 2009. Jeremy Cope represents the Society on the Dover Heritage Group, which is attempting to make the best of local heritage potential.

Publicity - The newsletter, expertly edited by Alan Lee, continues to be highly regarded by members and others and Mr Leach thanked all those involved. The excellent website, managed by Mike McFarnell, also keeps members up to date and helps to interest internet browsers not only in the Society but also in Dover. Its popularity has increased this year with the extensive Dover History Scrapbook, making use of Kathleen and Bob Hollingsbee's fascinating archive. Terry Sutton's regular press reports helps to keep the Society in the public eye.

Events - The Society was represented at the St. George's Day commemoration of the Zeebrugge Raid, at the Remembrance Services at the Town war memorial and at the Society's plaque to the Unknown Warrior at the Western Docks. Having lobbied DDC several years ago to commemorate the centenary of the first successful flight across the Channel and to refurbish Bleriot's landing site, five of members were delighted to represent the Society on the day.

Executive Committee - There has been one administrative change this year. Bill Naylor relinquished the task of minutes secretary but will remain on the Executive and as Secretary. Mr Leach thanked Mr Naylor for his many years of note taking. This duty will now be taken over by Mrs Barbara Stapleton. Mr Leach expressed thanks to the sterling efforts of Treasurer, Mike Weston.

Mr Leach concluded his report by thanking every member of the Executive and all those members who have contributed in some way to the work of the Society during the past year. Proposed by Mr Naylor, seconded by Mr Sherratt, the Chairman's report was accepted.

5). The Treasurer

Mr Mike Weston, the Treasurer, was unexpectedly unable to attend the AGM, and so the Treasurer's report was presented by Mr Jeremy Cope, and a set of accounts were provided for members at the meeting.

Mr Cope began by recognising Mr Leach's role within the Society and within Dover's civic life, thanked him on behalf of the Society and welcomed his decision to stand for election as chairman for the coming year.

Highlighted in the financial report by Mr Cope were the following:

- Subscriptions are slightly lower due obviously to a smaller membership and Mr Cope asked all members to recruit new members.
- Social events and members meeting overall provided a surplus of nearly £600 compared with last year of about £700. The comparison appears worse than it is in that last year included a surplus of £469 from the Tallis concert resulting from an over-provision made in 2008. Again, raffles do make a very significant contribution to the surplus we achieve.
- Newsletter. Costs are on a par with last year. Mrs Jean Marsh continues to do an excellent job raising advertising revenue of £700.
- Administrative Costs are overall about the same as last year but include an increase in postage, Telephone and Advertising offset by a decrease in affiliation fees and insurance.
- Now the stinker: Most of us are aware of the drop in interest rates due to the banking crisis. This is evidenced in the Society accounts with the drop in interest received from about £950 down to £50. Individuals can get around 3% to 4% on their savings but banks give only bank base rate to charities.
- Overall the Society made a surplus of £735 compared with £2158 last year - the drop largely due to interest rates.
- Turning to the balance sheet, the changes require no real comment with the surplus reflected in the cash balances and the value of the General Fund. In the notes to the accounts, the Publication Fund was used to finance the printing of our trail leaflets and the Town Hall Fund benefited from Gift aid received.

Proposed Mr Terry Sutton, seconded by Mr Pat Marsh, the Treasurer's report and financial statement (subject to audit) were accepted.

Mr Cope offered a vote of thanks to Mr Weston for his work as treasurer for the Dover Society.

6). The President

The President was **unable to attend** this meeting,

7). Motion to change the Constitution

Mr Cope gave details of the proposed change to the constitution. (See Attached).

Proposed by Mr Roger Marples, and seconded by Mr John Turnpenny, the motion was accepted by members, with no objections.

8). Motion to ratify Committee's action to apply to register a public right of way
Mr Cope gave details of the proposed application to register a public right of way.
(See Attached).

Proposed by Mr Alan Lee, and seconded by Mr Jim Francis , the motion was accepted by members, with no objections.

9). Motion on the Society's link with Civic Voice

Mr Leach gave details of the proposed link with Civic Voice.

Membership of Civic Voice is based on member numbers and the annual cost to the Society would be £800, although the first year is being offered at a discount. Following extensive discussions at the Executive Committee, the decision was taken to take no action on joining Civic Voice at present and that it seeks the option of affiliation.

Proposed by Mr Terry Sutton, seconded by Mrs Georgina Rapley, the motion was accepted by the members, with no objections.

10). The Election of Officers

All the current members of the Executive were available for re-election and as there had been no further nominations for officers, Mr Leach suggested that the election of officers be passed en bloc. Proposed by Mr Bill Naylor, seconded by Mr Martyn Webster, the officers were duly elected as follows:

Mr Derek Leach - Chairman

Mr Jeremy Cope - Vice-chairman

Mr William Naylor - Secretary

Capt. Mike Weston - Treasurer

11). The Election of the Committee

As there had been no further nominations for the Executive Committee, Mr Leach suggested that the election of the Executive Committee be passed en bloc. Proposed by Mr Bill Naylor, seconded by Mr Martyn Webster, the officers were duly elected as follows:

(To be listed)

12). Election of Audit Committee

As covered above in the Treasurer's report, Mr Cope asked members to approve the establishment of an Audit Committee, made up of the following members: Mr B Late, Mr J Turnpenny, and Mr J Widgery. Proposed by Mr Cope, and seconded by Mr Sutton, the Audit Committee was elected.

13). Any Other Business

Litter in the town centre - This appears to increase after the collection by dustcarts and the member asked whether The Society has any influence in asking for more street cleaning services. Mr Sherratt indicated that DDC was very responsive if notified of particular problems.

The AGM closed at 20.16pm.