



## **Southborough Society**

### **Minutes of 41<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting**

held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at 8.00pm in the  
Christ Church Day Care Centre, Broomhill Park Road, Southborough.

#### **1. Welcome**

In accordance with the constitution, the Society's Annual General Meeting was chaired by its President, Colonel Maxwell Macfarlane. He opened the meeting, welcoming all present. There were 35 in total. He asked if there were any guests; however, there were none - everyone declaring themselves to be a member of the Society.

The Agenda had been published in the Society's spring 2010 newsletter.

The President handed over the meeting temporarily to the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Mr Clive Tayler, for the next item of business.

#### **2. Confirmation of the re-appointment of the President**

The Chairman explained that the Society's constitution permitted the Executive Committee to appoint a President, subject to the appointment being renewed every two years and subject to confirmation at any general meeting of the Society.

The Chairman went on to explain that the Executive Committee had recently invited Maxwell Macfarlane to remain as the Society's President for a further two years until 2012, and he called on the meeting to confirm this appointment in accordance with the Society's constitution.

This confirmation was proposed by Mr Geoffrey Smethurst, seconded by Mr Roddy Hutchinson, and approved with no one against. Lt Col. Maxwell Macfarlane was duly re-confirmed as President of The Southborough Society.

The President then resumed the chairmanship of the AGM.

### **3. Minutes of the 2009 Annual General Meeting**

The President referred to the Minutes of the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, printed copies of which were provided. He reminded those present that the salient points from these Minutes had been published in the Society's summer 2009 Newsletter. The Society's Chairman added that the full Minutes had also been considered by the Executive Committee at its July 2009 meeting and were agreed at that time to be a true record.

Accordingly the President asked for a proposal that the Minutes be approved. This proposal was made by Mr. Michael Howes and, seconded by Dianne Hill, and was carried with no one against.

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman presented a report summarising the Society's activities over the past year. He thanked the President for his continued advice and support, and expressed his appreciation for all the hard work and enthusiasm of the Executive Committee, the Membership Secretary and many others who had contributed to the achievements of the Society during the 12 months since the last AGM.

A variety of events had been organised throughout the past year, including talks in the winter months, a heritage walk in the autumn, and various displays at local summer fetes. The hard work of the President and the Vice-Chairman, John Kennedy, in organising and manning the displays was especially noteworthy.

The Society had continued its involvement in the West Kent Civic Trust and the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies.

There had been some problems with the Society's website earlier in the year, and it was hoped these had now been resolved. An A-level student had volunteered to maintain the web content.

Special thanks were due to Michael Howes for his work as editor of the Newsletter and to Paul Rumball, the Newsletter's designer and graphic artist. The latest edition of the Newsletter contained a repeat of an earlier article published a few decades ago. It was likely that in future, more repeats would be published: this was considered to be justified, since many members would not have seen the original stories.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Garden Party, held in the summer of 2009 at Holden House, had been a highlight of the year for many members. The Society was greatly indebted to the two hosts, Mr and Mrs Levack, for the way they had enthusiastically and very generously supported the event.

The 'Planning' sub-group had again had a busy year, and the Chairman thanked those members of the Executive Committee and other members who had been most involved in this activity.

Planning for the future was an important aspect of the Society's activities.

The Society's annual Photographic Competition had been successfully staged once again in 2009, and organisation of the 2010 Competition was now underway.

The Chairman said he wished to express special thanks and appreciation to two retiring officers of the Society who were not standing for re-election. Mr Michael Webb, the Treasurer, had not only kept the Society's accounts in good order, but also had created a significant increase in the

Society's income due to his financial management skills. The effective and dependable work of the Society's Secretary, Mrs Jan Nixon, would be missed as well. He called upon the meeting to join him in showing their appreciation, and a warm round of applause followed.

There were no questions for the Chairman from the floor.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's report and accounts for the year 2009-10 were circulated in printed form.

Through the chair, the Treasurer reported that 2009-10 had been a very good year for the Society. Membership subscriptions income had increased; and several years' worth of tax rebates had been successfully claimed and received. The amount of interest earned had fallen significantly, and there had been additional costs, mainly associated with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary Garden Party. Despite the extra expense, however, the Society's had been able to post an excess of income over expenditure in 2009-10. The Society's reserves now stood at £15,322.80p.

The President expressed a valedictory for Michael Webb, thanking him for his very successful three years in office as Treasurer, and especially for a number of notable achievements during that period which were a great help to the Society.

## **6. Membership Secretary's Report**

Rachel Boughton, the Membership Secretary, said she was pleased to report that the Society's membership was at its highest level for three years. There were currently 430 members from 292 households. This compared with 414 members and 285 households in 2009. The majority of new members during this period had joined in June last year to enable them to visit Holden House for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Garden Party.

The Membership Secretary took the opportunity to make another plea to members to notify their e-mail address for easier communication; and reminded everyone who paid annually or whose five-year term was complete that their 2010-11 subscription payments were now due.

The President thanked the Membership Secretary for her update, and for her invaluable work in enrolling new members, and maintaining the membership rolls and related Society records.

## **7. Election of Officers and other Executive Committee Members for 2010-2011**

The President explained that three of the principal Officers were not seeking re-election in 2010 for personal reasons. These included: the Vice-Chairman, John Kennedy, after six years in the post; and as had already been mentioned, the Hon. Secretary, and the Hon. Treasurer. He thanked them all for their work for the Society. He was pleased to report that John Kennedy had agreed to volunteer to continue as a member of the Executive Committee.

The re-election of the Chairman, **-Clive Tayler**, for a further year was proposed by Dianne Hill, seconded by Rachel Boughton, and carried with no-one against.

The President explained that a search for replacement Officers, to succeed those who were not standing for re-election, had so far proved unfruitful. He appealed to the meeting for members to step forward to be Officers of the Society. However, there were no volunteers.

The President then called upon the meeting to re-elect the following members of the Executive Committee for a further year: **Nigel Heilpern, Michael Howes, John Kennedy, Ian Kinghorn, Bill Lush, and Enid Wood**. The election of these Committee members was proposed by Mrs Jo Beech, seconded by Dianne Hill, and carried with no-one against.

The President called for volunteers to the Executive Committee, and **Jo Beech** was duly elected to the Committee with no-one against.

The President thanked all the members for volunteering. The Committee would need to address the issue of lack of Officers.

Mrs Rachel Boughton had volunteered once again to be Membership Secretary, and was duly re-elected to that role (however, as in past years, not as a member of the Executive Committee).

There were, therefore, a possible four further vacancies on the Committee, and the President appealed to members to come forward, or to propose others, to fill these vacancies.

## **8. Election of the Independent Examiners**

The President extended special thanks to the two independent examiners of the accounts.

**Mr John White** had agreed to act in this capacity again in 2010-11. He was duly proposed by Geoffrey Smethurst, seconded by Michael Webb, and re-elected with no-one against.

The President explained that a volunteer to fill the second Independent Examiner position was now required.

## **9. Subscriptions and possible membership of Civic Voice**

The President explained that the setting of subscription rates would include a discussion about possible membership of Civic Voice. He called upon the Chairman of the Executive Committee to lead a discussion on these subjects.

The Chairman explained that Civic Voice was a new independent national organisation in the UK, set-up in 2010 to represent Civic and Amenity Societies across the country, like the Southborough Society and several hundred others. He referred to his Foreword in the latest edition of the Society's newsletter, and to the Civic Voice website, where the benefits of membership had been set out. These included benefits for the Society as a whole, such as reduced insurance premiums, and benefits to individual members, such as a free day-pass to a National Trust site, worth £14 per member. The costs were also explained: these were likely to be equivalent to approximately £1.50 to £2 per member per year, or £600-900 if taken en bloc from the Society's reserves and not through subscriptions. A lively discussion followed, during which time a range of different views were expressed. The idea of a 'trial membership' – joining for the first year to help get Civic Voice off the ground, and then backing out if the benefits were not realised – was suggested, but gained little support. During the debate, members also expressed their views on what they saw as the main issues for the town, such as the problems with the lack of town centre development, traffic jams and poor air quality.

The debate was in danger of becoming too wide ranging and inconclusive, although there were clearly a number of members strongly against joining Civic Voice. The Chairman of the

Executive Committee, through the President, therefore attempted to test the apparent mood of the meeting by calling for a show of hands on a motion that the Society should join Civic Voice; however, when this call failed to win support, he proposed another motion via the President that the Society should NOT join Civic Voice at this time. This latter motion showed a majority of 25 for, with 8 against and 2 abstentions. The motion was thus carried, and it was resolved that the Society would NOT join Civic Voice.

The Chairman then explained that membership subscriptions had not increased for two years, and if members did not approve an increase this year, there would be no opportunity to effect an increase before May 2012. With annual inflation currently over three per cent and rising, he was concerned that this could create a situation where a substantial increase in subscription levels was necessary in the future. In order to smooth out the increases, he proposed a small rise be approved this year, to take effect in 2011. A discussion followed. There was general approval for this approach, in fact for an 'above inflation' increase. The Chairman therefore made the proposal that subscriptions be increased in 2011 by approximately 8 to 10 per cent, the exact amount being left to the discretion of the Executive Committee. He called, through the President, for a show of hands on the motion; and this showed a majority of 33 members for, and 2 against. It was therefore resolved that subscriptions would rise by 8-10 per cent in 2011-12, the exact amount being left to the discretion of the Committee.

The possibility of payment by direct debit would be investigated.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

The President explained that the Society had recently invested in a new marquee, in order to better show its exhibits and items for sale at summer fetes; however, when not required, this marquee was also being offered to members of the Society for hire for private functions at a very reasonable cost of £10 per day. Anyone interested should contact him in the first instance.

A member present said that she had brought along copies of a recently published book about the history of St Thomas' Church, and would recommend it: copies could be purchased for £8.99.

Mr Peter Barrett suggested that it might be courteous at future AGM's to ask the guest speaker to talk first if the meetings went on so long. The President commented that it was most unusual, if not unprecedented, for the meeting to carry on for so long. However, the business had now come to an end, and he thanked the guest speaker – a Society member, Mr Mike Rusbridge – for his patience.

The Annual General Meeting concluded at approximately 9.25pm.

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Immediately following the Annual General Meeting, Cllr Mike Rusbridge gave a most interesting talk on his time in office as Mayor of the Borough.

*Chairman's Postscript, Monday 5 July 2010:*

These unconfirmed Minutes of the Society's 2010 AGM have been reviewed and approved by the Chairman (May 2010) and by the President (June 2010), and will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

*Signed*

Clive Tayler  
Chairman

Maxwell Macfarlane  
President

*Date*

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