

Portsmouth Society AGM 23 May 2018

Executive summary 2017-2018

It has been a busy year during which the Executive was boosted by Matt Dixon taking the role of Honorary Treasurer and David Surr as Newsletter Editor. The Executive continued to meet on a monthly basis with additional Special Meetings to discuss the Charity Commission Code of Practice, Membership development, and Data Protection legislation. The new website was set up and will continue to be developed to incorporate the necessary changes. The Executive joined the planning team at two meetings to discuss the Issues and Options as the first stage of reviewing the Portsmouth Plan which is likely to require attention and effort during the coming year.

The executive considers the membership of Civic Voice an important aspect of the Portsmouth Society as the national body which provides support, training and advice, in addition to discounted insurance. Portsmouth City Council appointed three Heritage Champions – Cllrs Stephen Morgan M.P., John Ferrett and Steve Hastings. We were pleased that Stephen and John each attended an executive meeting but Steve Hastings has resigned from the City Council when he moved to the Isle of Wight where he has been elected as a Councillor for a Newport ward.

The Portsmouth Society was delighted to publish a book by Jackie Baynes entitled “Guns N Roses” depicting the history of Lumps Fort and the surrounding area. We enjoyed a wide variety of talks on subjects from Pubs to Hovercraft and a visit to Portsmouth International Port. The Society celebrated the 50 years of Conservation Areas with a talk from Heritage England, and a guided walk with Ben Cracknell of the Conservation Area in Queen Street, Portsea. We were pleased when member Charles Burns was a recipient of one of the City’s 2017 Civic Awards.

The Planning Team consumed many biscuits and commented to no avail on a number of applications which, in our opinion, detracted rather than added to our heritage. Examples included: **The Castle Tavern on Somers Road** is a distinctive castellated and locally listed building which has undergone some shocking modernisations for which this application sought retrospective approval. The Planning Officer's report was in agreement that the application be refused but following a Councillor speaking in support of the application it was granted permission. The rationale being that the changes (removing window frames and blocking up former openings) added to the security of the property and that the pub served a local community when many pubs were closing! In our opinion not the best design criteria.

The Travelodge, Stanhope Road. Whilst we were pleased with the design following the curve of Stanhope Road we felt the architects missed an opportunity to provide larger windows giving a less brutal aspect externally and giving residents better views over the park and a good impression of green space on an inner-city site.

Still awaiting ratification is the application for a 10 storey hall of residence on the site of the old **Unity Hall Social Club on Coburg Street.** This has Officer's recommendation for Conditional Permission despite being against their own guidelines for a 4 to 8 storey building on the site. The existing building is a fine example over 2/3 floors of the Edwardian architect A.E. Cogswell which we would have liked to be incorporated. Its proposed tall replacement complete with yellow lattice supports is a poor addition to our landscape in a prominent position.

We did however raise a number of objections to some applications during the year with which PCC agreed and refused permission. Those of note included:

The Annexe to Enterprise House in Isambard Brunel Road where they wanted to add four storeys in what the applicant called a 'contemporary' design, which we likened to be lego-like and using the wrong colour bricks.

The application to construct a property at **25 Station Road** which tried to fit a detached house into insufficient space which would have resulted in next door being half a semi as if it had been bomb damaged.

It hasn't all been negative and we did support the application for **5 South Parade**. This is a lovely structure in need of some TLC and the proposal to change from a children's nursery to a large family residence is tasteful. The application removes some awkward additions and adds a bay window and French doors which enhance the property.

We ended the year on a high, feeling that sometimes we make a difference. This was at **29B South Parade** where an application was made to insert an additional storey and add back the mansard on top. An interesting concept but one which was proposed without consideration to the lovely lower three floors of the Grade II listed building with full length bay windows. We were pleased to see that the design has been re-submitted following our suggestions and which we now support.

Thanks to regulars Robin Kay, Deane Clark, Terry Halloran and particularly the team leader John Holland, and new member Jimmy Jackson.

Portsmouth and Southsea Tree wardens continue to make progress with a wide variety of schemes from commemorative and other tree planting, maintaining previous plantings, leading guided tree appreciation walks, giving talks and working with a variety of other local like-minded organisations, to considering tree related planning applications. We also liaise closely with the Tree Council and the Portsmouth City Council arboriculturalist. Pauline Powell and her team do much to raise awareness of the importance of trees and the benefits they provide in the City's dense urban environment.

The Design Awards held a prestigious Oscar-style award ceremony at the Royal Maritime Club that attracted a high attendance, particularly from the professionals and owners of the nominated projects. This event raises the profile of the Society, which we hope to maintain over coming years. However, the judges were disappointed in the quality of New Builds this year. Thanks are due to the Administrator, **David Baynes** who organises the smooth-running of the whole event, Chair of Judges **Dr Celia Clark**, and this year's judges – Mick Morris, Andrew Pottinger and Martin Pearce. Members are encouraged to be the Society's eyes to alert David to developments, whatever the size, which might be considered for the Design Award.

Southsea Sea Defences - We have notified our members of ongoing information-sharing meetings that are being held throughout the City, inviting them to make their views known to the Authorities. East Solent Coastal Partnership who are responsible for this major project have agreed to make a presentation to our members when the proposed plans are more fully developed. Some members are involved with encouraging the City to improve how it engages residents and businesses in the design and planning process for the defences and the possibility of linking this with looking at the Southsea bit of the Portsmouth Plan review.

We are grateful that, despite some medical challenges, **Colin Kidby** has continued to look after membership which is growing again reaching 117 at the end of the Society's year. As a registered Charity we are able to claim Gift Aid donations, so please continue to support this worthwhile

benefit if you are a UK registered taxpayer. We also thank **Eunice Coneybeare** who led the work in developing the Society's new website.

We would encourage members to introduce friends to the Society and publicise our meetings where possible. Finally, thank you to the members who demonstrate your interest and knowledge on a wide range of subjects, through the questions and discussion at all the Portsmouth Society events. We hope to continue the range of activities and topics that appeal to you, and encourage your participation.

Prepared by Sue McClory on behalf of the Executive Committee.