



Vale of Evesham Civic Society Annual General Meeting,

7.30pm Tuesday 09th April 2024

Present: Gill and Ken Pawson, Pat and Ian Stanton, Brian Chilver, Adrian Peake, Paula Bowden, Julie and Tim Haines, Linda Hart, Bill and Caroline Petts, Galen Bartholomew, Barbara and John Goodwin, Noel and Alan Chambers, Olga Allen, Jim Powell, Wendy and Peter Lloyd, Jackie Hale, Wendy and Mike Wagstaff, Margaret Hodgetts, Mr Sutton

1. **Apologies received:** Sue Ablett, Betty Ballard, Caroline Abbey, Deirdre Sutton
2. **Approval of previous AGM minutes:** Minutes from the 51st AGM meeting on 06th April 2023 were approved.
3. **Matters arising from previous AGM meeting:** Action AGM-01: Ask WDC to increase their presence at the Library. Having unsuccessfully tried to progress the action with WDC Councillor Julie Tucker, we then contacted the Evesham Town Clerk Jo Adams, who advised us to contact WDC in person. We spoke with Customer Service Manager Jo Franklin who stated that they monitor demand and it's currently not sufficient to increase their hours at present (currently Fridays 0900-1500). However, they do offer an appointment service at Evesham on all other weekdays. Residents should phone 01386 565000 and hold for the operator, or email Joanne.Franklin@wychavon.gov.uk to schedule a time to see people face-to-face at the Library office.
4. **Chair's Annual Report:** This had been circulated to members in advance of the AGM. Gill presented highlights from the report which had been produced by herself and Paula. It covered the two main aims of the Civic Society: social activities, and active involvement in our town's heritage by influencing and working with local government and other organisations. She urged members to encourage local friends and family to join the Civic Society and to join the committee. Brian suggested that members might like to attend a future committee meeting, without commitment, to see how we operate. Gill then went on to talk about how the committee gets involved in planning matters, the Evesham Town Prospectus and Place Board and ran through the seven projects the committee had carried out during the year (either initiated by ourselves, or on behalf of the Town Council or Place Board). She then informed the AGM that the big piece of work to photograph all 166 listed buildings in Evesham and Hampton had been completed and that they were now printed in two catalogues (at a total cost of £75).
5. **Hon Treasurer's Report:** This had been circulated in advance of the AGM. Adrian presented the highlights of the report. He was grateful that most members now receive VECS bulletins and correspondence by email as he stated that the current membership subscription of £10 does not cover the cost of printing/postage and therefore urged everyone who can to sign up for email. Adrian stated that for each meeting held at Ecgwins Club, the committee has to give £2.50 of each £4 received to the Club and that speakers generally now ask for £50 so we rarely break even. He gave the example of March's talk about Tewkesbury generated only £3 profit. He mentioned that although the accounts look as if the Garden Party made a profit, committee members had refused reimbursement for the food provided. Paula also mentioned that our monthly committee meetings are held at homes now to avoid having to pay to meet in Ecgwins. The 3 new VECS banners displayed at the AGM had been a significant capital outlay (£711.66) but will last for some years and have replaced the old and tatty (and heavy) displays. Adrian finished by stating that these accounts for the year ending 29 February 2024 had been audited and approved.

6. **Election of Officers:** Gill thanked Sue Campbell who had decided to stand down from the Committee after many years of service. There had been no nominations for new committee members and no one at the AGM offered to join the committee. All current committee members had agreed to stand again: Gill, Brian, Adrian, Paula, Pat, Ian, Julie and Tim. The election of officers was approved.
7. **Election of Executive Committee:** Gill, Brian, Adrian and Paula had agreed to maintain their current roles of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary respectively. The election of the executive committee was approved.
8. **Appointment of Auditors:** Peter Gay had agreed to act as Auditor for the following year.
9. **Membership rates for 2025/26**

Adrian reminded all members that membership runs from 01 March to end February each year in accordance with the VECS financial year. The committee spends a lot of time chasing up late payment of membership subscriptions. Please could members check their standing orders/payment arrangements to ensure payment is made in March each year. Agreement was reached to raise membership subscriptions with effect 01 March 2025 as follows:

 - a. **Member £12 (increased from £10)** Agreed by vote of hands
 - b. **Joint Members £18 (increased from £15)** Agreed by vote of hands
 - c. **Business Member £30 (increased from £25)** Agreed by vote of hands. It was noted that we currently only have two business members.
10. **Discussion on what members think the priorities should be for the committee to be working on**

Jackie Hale mentioned that many fascia boards on shop fronts are gawdy and in poor repair. Gill stated that WDC Planning and Enforcement don't stand up to national organisations to refuse shop signage. She cited how inappropriate the Job Centre frontage looks in our conservation area. It was noted that other towns ie Marlowe are able to ensure shop/business frontages are in keeping with the town's heritage. Paula mentioned that Howden Insurance (formerly A Plan Insurance) on Vine Street has recently changed its name and frontage – this is in keeping with the conservation area guidelines. Apparently, Howden has over 100 premises and they all have the same frontage. The Committee believe that supporting the Almonry Restoration Project should be a VECS priority for 2024/25 and this was agreed at the meeting.
11. **Any Other Business**
 - a. **Ludlow Trip** Linda Hart mentioned that, at her suggestion, Gill had arranged a trip to Ludlow for members, on 14 May. In return Gill was requested to take 15 Ludlow Town Guides on a tour of the historic town centre, with lunch afterwards at the Royal Oak which took place on 28 March, with help from Linda. At present only 8 VECS members have signed up with Pat Stanton to attend. The committee hopes that more members will sign up.
 - b. **VECS at the Medieval Market 18-19 May:** Brian is looking for volunteers to help out at the VECS stand in St Lawrence's Church on both days. It's an opportunity to meet residents and visitors and spread the word about what VECS does, share information about our built heritage, and how you can get involved.
 - c. **Shelsley Walsh Mill on the Hill:** Linda and Galen will be meeting up at Shelsley Walsh for a tour of the Mill on the Hill on Sunday 09 June. They are having an open day <https://www.shelsleywalsh.com/mill-open-days>
 - d. **Funny Girl:** Jackie mentioned that EODS are performing Funny Girl the Musical at The Henrician 14-18 May and tickets are still available <https://www.henrician.org/events/>
12. **Almonry Restoration Project:** Ashleigh Jayes, Almonry Centre Manager then provided members with an informative talk about the history of the Almonry building, a description of some of its artefacts, the successful application for funding for phase 1 (building repairs). The Almonry building is owned by Evesham Town Council Details are available here

<https://www.almonryevesham.org>. Phase 1 works starts sometime after October 2024 and must be completed by end March 2027 ie the funding is available for 3 years. The building needs to be vacated by October 2024 and so premises are being sought to move the shop, Tourist Information Centre and office space for staff into the town centre. The artefacts and museum display cabinets will also need to move into storage. The Public Hall and St Lawrence's Church have already been discounted.

Plans for phase 2 are currently unfunded and cover improvements to the museum e.g. exhibition cases, digital interpretation, improving accessibility. Ashleigh is very keen that the Evesham community co-curate the new museum space.

Ashleigh talked about ways she/we can help with fundraising.

- Use the Almonry on the online Easy Fundraising App <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk> which donates to the Almonry (at no cost to yourself) when you're online shopping with specific retailers.
- Buy special gifts from the Almonry shop
- Attend and support fundraising events
- Spread the word!

It's not possible to get gift aid on donations as it isn't a registered charity and there is currently no "Friends of the Almonry" to coordinate fundraising. Ashleigh is planning a public event in the Town Hall on Saturday 11th May where she'll be on hand to talk about the restoration project and gather further support. Ashleigh can be contacted via ashleigh@eveshamtowncouncil.gov.uk and/or the Almonry building on 01386 446944.

Brian then informed attendees of his proposal to use one or two original paintings he'd bought of the Almonry building at a local art competition with the aim of getting a number of excellent quality prints made, having them framed for sale for £150 each with all profits going to the Almonry Restoration Project. Brian had already received written permission from the artist Lesley Brockbank to do this (he read out her letter at the meeting). This proposal was met with general approval. Jackie Hale mentioned that she had known the artist, Roy (surname unknown) who created the pen and ink art work for an Almonry tea towel and that she has the original art work and believes the artist's family would be agreeable for it also to be used in some way towards fundraising.

Once the talk and general discussion about Almonry fundraising had come to an end, the meeting ended informally.

Post meeting note

Two members, Bill and Caroline Petts requested, as they were leaving the meeting, that a vote of thanks be formally recorded for the hard work of the Committee over the last year. Paula duly promised to record it.

Paula Bowden, VECS Secretary