



CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY

1 May 2020

Dear Members,

I trust this note finds you well and coping as well as can be expected under the circumstances. I thought this might be a good time to update you on Civic Society business.

AGM. Due to Covid-19, we were forced to cancel this year's AGM. We followed Charity Commission advice on trustee succession and welcome new trustees Steve Bryson and Sarah Harvey. Steve has already taken over as *Our Town* Editor and Communications lead and Sarah will lead on Heritage Open Days. Claire Attenborough will assume the role of Treasurer from Andrew Chard. Andrew has kindly offered to remain as a trustee as has Richard de Carteret. We say goodbye to Fiona Clarke and thank her for her tremendous hard work and sound judgment.

Events. This year, we sought to make our events programme more active and less sedentary so it is with some irony that we have had our wings clipped by Covid-19! You will appreciate that all our trips and talks have had to be cancelled. We will obviously keep an eye on the changing situation and will seek to reinstate some of them as soon as practicable. We would certainly like to get together, if possible, for the summer party to re-establish friendships, although given the reports of many whilst under lock and key, I suspect dieting and drying out might be preferable to some!

Planning Forum. The Planning Forum has continued to submit responses for planning applications and listed building consents to Cheltenham Borough Council. This has been facilitated by relaxation of government rules on remote working and submission dates but, like so many changes to our lives, I suspect this model will be retained after the crisis. It was a pleasure to welcome David Oakhill, Head of Planning at Cheltenham Borough Council, as an observer at the last online meeting. Interestingly, he reported that, unlike some local authorities, there has been no discernible reduction in planning applications in Cheltenham during 'lockdown.'

Projects. Many of us are rediscovering old interests and hobbies. Just because we're cooped up doesn't mean we can't make ourselves useful or look ahead to when we can start to return to normality, so here are a few projects and activities we have either underway or lined up, to which you might like to contribute:

- a. The Society has long discussed collating **photographs of Cheltenham**. With time on our hands, we would like to pull together a few volunteers to start that project off with a simple methodology, archive and index as well as the collation itself.

b. Phil Collins has started digitising the **Civic Society Scrapbooks** by photographing them, editing them and saving them for future reference. We have plenty of volumes to go through so if anyone is interested in helping out with this task from the safety of their home, please email Phil (parmoorhouse@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk) and we'll look to make arrangements.

c. Linked with the previous projects, we will probably never see our town as quiet as this again so when you are popping out for your exercise or provisions, perhaps you could capture some **photographs of quiet Cheltenham** to add to the archive. Signs of the crisis and changes to our everyday routine are likely to be most interesting to those following us.

d. We're preparing the **June Issue of Our Town** and would like your input. We've all learnt a lot about ourselves, other people, our habitat and our institutions during this 'lockdown' and we'd like to hear your brief reflections on them as they affect the Civic Society's interests. What have you missed in town and that is therefore now more valuable to you? What haven't you missed that perhaps you could live without? Thinking of the consequences for businesses and organisations, what do you think will change in Cheltenham? What measures might help the town? How do you think the Civic Society can help the town to adjust to its new operating environment? These are the sort of questions we'd like you to address but there may be others. Please email your brief comments to Steve Bryson comms@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk .

If you have any other ideas about our role in the 'bounce back', we'd be delighted to hear from you. Please feel free to share this letter with friends and family. In the meantime, stay safe and we look forward to catching up in person before too long.

Yours ever,

Andrew