

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FIRE BRIGADE SOCIETY

SUNDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2023 at 16.00

HELD AT FIREGROUND MUSEUM, ROCHDALE

Members in attendance: - Colin Carter, Robert Bonner, Gavin Stewart, Iain Kitchen, Tom Howell, Kurtis Ingleton, Steve Morgan, Simon Adamson, Steve Morgan, Matthew Leggott, Malcolm Nuttall, Wayne Gilmore, Simon Rowley, Archie McKinnon, Adam Griffiths, James Lambert, Richard Thompson, Richard Williams, Mary McCormick, Les Edkins, Wayne Davies and Dan Jessup

Members in attendance via Teams/Zoom: - Marion Carter, Andy Daley, Mike Smith, Andrew Fenton, John Fenton and Martin Kingsnorth.

1. Welcoming Address: - Robert Bonner welcomed members attending the AGM weekend to the Fireground Museum and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. Robert spoke of his frustration at the lack of assistance given by GMFRS towards the visit.

2. Apologies: - Were received from Steve Udall and Geraint Roberts.

3. Appointment of Society President: - Colin Carter was pleased to announce that Robert Bonner had accepted the invitation to be the new President. Colin welcomed Robert to the position and on behalf of the membership thanked him for his support. Robert replied saying his father had founded the Society 60 years ago and he was honoured to be asked to become President on this anniversary.

Colin Carter then presented the President's chain of office to Robert and a bouquet of flowers to Linda Bonner, thanking her for coming into the museum and opening the shop for our visit.

4. Appointment of Chairman: - Colin Carter asked Robert Bonner if he would chair the remainder of the meeting, Robert agreed and took the chair.

5. Advise of Minutes Secretary: - Gavin Stewart had kindly offered to take the minutes.

6. Minutes of the last AGM: - The minutes of the last AGM held on the 8th February 2019 were submitted for acceptance. Richard Williams proposed and Les Edkins seconded the acceptance. There were no matters arising from these minutes.

7. Result of vote – Revised Constitution: - Colin Carter announced that 166 envelopes were returned by members. 1 of the envelopes had a voting form from last year's vote in it and was discounted. One envelope was posted without a stamp attached resulting in the Society having to pay Royal Mail for it to be delivered. A further envelope had no stamp attached and delivery was not accepted. Therefore, the voting figures are based on 165 envelopes.

To accept the revised Constitution: 161 in favour 4 against

8. Result of vote – 2022/2023 Annual Report: -

To accept the 2022/2023 Annual Report: 165 in favour 0 against

9. Result of vote – 2022/2023 Accounts: -

To accept the 2022/2023 Accounts: 165 in favour 0 against.

Colin Carter explained the Society bank account had recently been changed from Barclays Bank to Lloyds Bank resulting in a saving of £165.00 in bank charges per year as there are no charges with Lloyds. The move also gave us enhanced access features such as online banking and depositing of cheques via online services.

10. Any Other Business: - Wayne Davies thanked Gavin Stewart for organising the AGM weekend although it was disappointing that we were let down by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

Colin Carter announced only one nomination had been received for the position of Treasurer and this was from Wayne Gilmore. Wayne was duly elected as Treasurer.

Colin Carter thanked Alan Broughton for all his hard work during the year organising visits. He also thanked members who had attended visits during the year and highlighted the disappointing numbers that did attend some visits including the AGM weekend. He also thanked Richard Whiting, Gary Chapman, Wayne Davies and Les Edkins for their assistance arranging visits this year and his fellow SMT members for all their hard work behind the scenes.

Matthew Leggott: How many members do we currently have? Marion Carter Membership Secretary replied, via Teams, 362 members and sadly during the course of the past 12 months 5 had passed away.

Colin Carter then presented Robert Bonner with a cheque for £100.00 in recognition for allowing the Society to visit the Fireground Museum and hosting the AGM.

Simon Adamson Membership number 180: There was talk of the Society failing by the previous ESB when they handed over to the present Management Team. Is there a succession and contingency plan for the loss of income due to members not renewing and passing away plus the increased costs of printing and posting Fire Cover.

Simon also asked about the Society assets and how there needs to be a plan in place to wind down the Society and what to do with the assets. Asked the Society Management Team to look at this and come back to the membership in the next 6 months.

Colin Carter replied there is a succession plan and it is being continually looked at plus the assets are all recorded and their location known. Eventually it will be up to the membership to decide what to do with them. Some of the assets were owned by the Society, whilst others had been donated or bequeathed to the Society.

Richard Williams: In the previous Constitution there was a plan for the assets should the Society be wound down.

Matthew Leggott: What are the assets? Colin Carter confirmed the Society has a library (500 books) currently in storage at the Fire Museum in Sheffield, a selection of memorabilia including medals, helmets, badges, firefighting equipment and a manual pump in the Fireground Museum to give some examples.

John Godwin: What value are we getting out of the loaned books?

Richard Williams: Most books are in good condition. There was a plan for members to borrow or look at the books at the Sheffield Museum. However, it appears not many members knew the library existed.

Wayne Gilmore offered to be a link between the Society and the Sheffield Museum.

Matthew Leggott: Do the books have any value?

Colin Carter: Not all have a value although some did.

Wayne Davies: Would the Fireground museum be interested in the books.

Robert Bonner: Would be happy to look at it.

Richard Thompson: Agreed the Society should have a wind-up plan, in black and white, to show the Membership.

AP1 – SMT to investigate wind up plan should the inevitable happen.

AP2 – SMT to investigate and propose a plan for all Society assets.

Simon Rowley: As Vehicle Recorder he was having difficulties obtaining fleet lists from brigades but hoped to have 10 completed by December. He was though happy to pass on the position of Vehicle Recorder to another Member at this time. Colin Carter thanked Simon for his efforts and would arrange for the position of Vehicle Recorder to be advertised to the membership in the next Fire Cover.

John Godwin: Regarding the future of the Society. Number of members declining, not many coming on visits, lack of new members, especially younger members with James Lambeth being a recent exception. Should we be looking at Europe and the USA for new members? With the cost of postage and printing rising should we be looking at producing Fire Cover in a digital format and link to an interactive Society website?

Colin Carter: Previous vote to go digital was not approved however there is the second increase in postage costs this year, of 55 pence per copy from £1.85 to £2.40 for each UK envelope, being brought in by Royal Mail on 2 October plus increased printing costs next year.

Wayne Davies: There should be the opportunity to pay membership by cheque. Colin Carter confirmed this option is still available.

Marion Carter: Far more members paid their membership by Bank Transfer than by cheque.

Steve Morgan: Could members receive either hardcopy or digital versions of Fire Cover.

Wayne Davies: Perhaps an Annual Fire Cover and updates online.

Matthew Leggott: Cheaper to have digital copy sent to members due to different platform costs of hardcopy.

Wayne Davies: Can the Society Management Team come back with a plan for Fire Cover.

Andy Daley: Happy to look into it.

Robert Bonner: Various Societies have the same problems and digital can bring its own problems.

Colin Carter: Asked members to bear with the Society Management Team and there would be nominations for vacant positions on the team shortly. Colin once again asked members to help with the running of the Society and to help with articles and photographs for Fire Cover.

All three action points to be reviewed by SMT and proposed to the 2025 AGM at the latest.

Wayne Gilmore: Thanked Colin, Marion and other members of the Society Management Team for saving the Society. Wayne urged other members to do something for the Society like he'd offered to be Treasurer.

Adam Griffiths: Why is the Society website and Facebook site not interactive and members should be allowed to post comments.

John Godwin: Sites need improving.

Colin Carter: Tentative steps were made to start with but the sites need looking at for improvement.

Richard Williams: Caution should be taken if you allow comments as you don't know what is going to be said on the sites and they may cause trouble or offence.

Iain Kitchen: Suggested a private Facebook site for members only to access. This could be a forum for members to put information on. He said he wouldn't put information forward due to the previous management of the Society. Iain had spoken to firefighters on stations and believes no one knows about the Society anymore.

John Godwin: We need to improve social media from the Society.

Robert Bonner: Brigades make their own problems and difficult to get through to them about what the Society is. Robert also asked about the possibility of chasing up previous non renewing members. Colin explained we do our best but are constrained by data protection.

AP3 – SMT to investigate digitalisation of Fire Cover, improved presence on social media and an improved website.

Colin Carter thanked Richard Whiting, Gary Chapman, Wayne Davies and Les Edkins for arranging visits this year.

Wayne Davies again thanked Gavin for his hard work over the weekend.

Gavin replied, apologising for the lack of assistance from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, and said the matter would be taken further. He also thanked Les and David, both volunteers at Fireground, for coming in on a Sunday afternoon to help Robert Bonner in the moving and positioning of the museum vehicles for photography.

11. 2024/2025 AGM Venue: - Colin Carter announced that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service had kindly agreed to host next years AGM. Its possible the event will be held over three days and moved to the end of June rather than September. Further details will be announced in due course.

Meeting closed at 17.08