

Minutes of GREN AGM 2015 - held on 25th November 2015

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Apologies:

Meeting was quorate with seven members present.

GREN Committee members: Peter Chan (PC) (Chair); John Booth (JB) (Secretary); Tony Cowling (AC) (Treasurer); Tricia Marcouse (TM);

GREN members: Chris Aldridge; Will Alliston; Chris Burden

Apologies: Tanja Rebel (GREN Committee member); Paul Harper; Rob Weston.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Actions:

Minutes: Minutes of last AGM on 9th October 2014

<http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/141009GRENAGMMinutes.pdf> were agreed with no corrections required and no matters arising.

Actions: There were no actions from 2014 AGM.

3. Chair's annual report

PC said that in general GREN was functioning satisfactorily.

Activities had included:

- Pre-election Hustings meeting attended by about 50 people
- Response to Council's proposed Budget Cuts to Sustainability Team
- Stall at Reading Town Meal (shared with RCCP and TTR) at which public had expressed interest and eight had left contact details.
- One Committee meeting
- Two Members' Meetings
- Provided advice to CADRA on its Home Energy meeting
- Representation on:
 - Social Value in Commissioning Project (final report delayed - expected January)
 - Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP)
 - Reading Cycle Forum (only one meeting held)

Constitution calls for three Members' Meetings. While this had not been achieved the Committee Meeting had been open and publicised to members so with the AGM there had been four opportunities for members to be involved during the year.

JB said Website and Facebook continued to be active with a steady trickle of new members to each. Three members appeared to have left the website – mails to them were returned as delivery failures. It was agreed to delete them from the website. (**Action – JB**).

AC commented that he thought the website provided a good facility for news and events.

4. Treasurer report on finances

AC said financial position was satisfactory – 'in the black' - a statement had been posted to <http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/Gren20142015balancesheet.pdf>.

It was agreed that financial records over 6 years old should be scanned and saved to the website, and the paper records shredded and discarded. (**Action – AC, JB**).

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5. Elect new Committee including Chair, Secretary and Treasurer

The five existing members of the Committee were re-elected, with Officers continuing in their roles.

Will Alliston was elected to membership of the Committee.

6. A.O.B. and 'Forum'

6.1 Climate Events for COP21

Noted the proposed events:

- Reading People's March for Climate, Justice + Jobs on Saturday 28th November <http://readingpeoplesmarch.org/>
- People's March for Climate, Justice + Jobs in London on Sunday 29th November <http://www.campaigncc.org/29novdemo>
- Reading Climate Day on 5th December <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Reading-Climate-Day/900189480034621> arranged on behalf of Bishop of Reading

Price of coach transport to London March had been reduced to £15. Agreed to re-post to GREN website. (**Action – JB**).

JB said he had been invited to have dinner with people behind Reading Climate Day after their events on 5th December to improve liaison.

6.2 Duplication of events

Concern expressed about events with shared objectives clashing. e.g. Reading Climate Day 'Green Christmas' market clashes with both St Peter's Fair and Econet Christmas Tree sale.

It would be useful to have a calendar function on the website so that planned events could be posted long in advance ... so would be visible to other people planning events ... but would only be e-mailed out to members on a defined date close to the day of the event. This should be discussed with website providers. (**Action – JB**).

6.3 Consultation on Sustainability Team

RBC proposal to scrap Sustainability Manager post and reduce team was discussed. GREN had submitted comments to an earlier public consultation on Budget Cuts in October 2015

<http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/151016SustainabilityManagerConsultation.pdf>

As a RCCP Board member JB had recently received a letter from Giorgio Framalocco, Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services, inviting further comments to a 'Staff Consultation' by noon on 16th December. This confirmed the proposal to delete the Sustainability Manager's post and re-locate the remaining team members (who deliver energy and water efficiency in relation to the Council's property estate) to a 'Property' team. There would be limited or no support to partner organisations such as RCCP and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Members commented that:

- Proposal should be opposed;
- Sustainability Team should not be managed by a services department - it should be in Corporate Policy so as to influence transport and development agendas;
- The expertise of the existing team should be retained to support the Council's Reading 2050 agenda.

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Agreed that a draft response should be prepared and consulted on with the membership via the website. **(Action – JB).**

6.4 Climate / Energy Talks?

JB had received a suggestion from Dr. Rayner Mayer that it would be good to follow FoE's CC talk from Prof. Allan with a lecture series (monthly? Bi-monthly?) on CC-related topics:

“a set of monthly discussions to follow up the Paris outcomes – these should be introduced by a speaker followed by a structured discussion” – possible topics identified were –

- What Paris deliberations achieved
- Extreme weather events and how this could affect the Reading region
- Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels
- Impact of climate change on biodiversity”

Members thought it was a good idea ... if it could be arranged ... would require publicity and room hire as well as administration. Comments/suggestions:

- Would be good badged as RCCP, or failing this as GREN;
- Badging as Reading FoE might be less successful because seen by public as a pressure group action.
- Joint sponsorship might be a way forward
- With in-depth meetings on more-specialist topics would these be ‘public interest’ or would they attract smaller audiences? Aim for 30+ rather than over 50?
- Should see if University of Reading would co-ordinate events – they do good publicity and have lecture rooms available – have an ‘outreach’ function
- Events at University not so accessible to Greater Reading audiences as town-centre locations
- Possible central venues included: Global Café (hire it on Monday evenings); RBC Council Chamber; Salvation Army

Agreed to float the idea with other organisations and seek a way forward. **(Action – JB).**

6.5 Air Quality

RBC had produced a report on Air Quality http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4298/Item-16-SEPT-AQ-report-Nov-2015/pdf/Item_16_SEPT_AQ_report_Nov_2015.pdf

Public Health England estimate the percentage of deaths in 2008 linked to particulate air pollution in Reading as 5.9% of the population over 25, which equates to an estimated 62 deaths. There would be additional deaths from the effects of oxides of nitrogen.

Reading has launched a consultation – closing date 11th January 2016 - on an update to its Air Quality Management Plan http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4209/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP_Proposed_actions.pdf

AC said he had written to Reading's Air Quality staff. World Health Organisation targets were tighter than EU targets.

Agreed to post information on GREN website to encourage people to respond, and to call for comments **(Action – JB).**

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6.6 Cycling in Broad Street

RBC has launched a consultation – closing date 31st December 2015 - on Cycling in Broad Street “to consider the suitability of permitting or banning cycling for the whole length of Broad Street”

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/cyclingconsultation>

Members were concerned at poor provision for east-west cycling through central Reading but were not confident that any particular solution would be best.

Agreed to seek advice from Reading Cycle Campaign and to post information on GREN website and call for comments (**Action – JB**).

6.7 RBC policy on Food Waste.

RBC report to Committee on 18th November had discussed arguments for and against kerbside food waste collections and had decided not to go ahead with it at present.

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4262/Item-14/pdf/Item_14.pdf

Members thought that: people could be educated to produce less food waste; a pilot project in Caversham using South Oxfordshire’s methods and equipment might be sensible rather than doing nothing because rolling out across the whole of Reading would be costly and risky; and that more should be done to increase Reading’s recycling rate for non-food materials.

Agreed to post information on GREN website (**Action – JB**).

6.7 Criteria for GREN Group Membership.

GREN Group Membership is supposed to be for ‘Voluntary Organisations and Groups’. JB had sought advice from RVA on whether ‘Bencoms’ and ‘CICs’ and registered charities should be classed as voluntary groups – such structures might have professional staff or their boards might receive salaries.

Advice was that it was up to the GREN Committee to take decisions on individual cases, but GREN could amend its constitution if it wished to do so to give clarity. The NCVO have a wide definition at <http://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac14/what-is-the-voluntary-sector/>

It was agreed that Nature Nurture <http://www.nature-nurture.co.uk/>, an educational CIC based in Reading, should be invited to join GREN as a Group if it wished to do so. (**Action – JB**).

6.7 Berkshire Energy Pioneers.

AC said that because of proposed government cuts to the Feed In Tariff Berkshire Energy Pioneers had ‘pre-registered’ a large number of solar roofs which had to be installed by September 2016 to get a useful FiT. He said that for business reasons the organisation was now trading as ‘Reading Campus Community Energy Society’ and a share offer was expected early in 2016.

7. Date and location of next meeting

TBA: October/November 2016.

Minutes: Version 1 – 4th December 2015.