

Transition Town Berkhamsted
Working to build a strong sustainable community



Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting of 8 August 2012
Venue: King's Arms, Berkhamsted

Constitution

Seb Beloe read out the additional sentences within the revised constitution, concerning Membership:

6. MEMBERSHIP

- (a) Members shall be subscribers to this constitution and individuals and organisations admitted without reference to wealth, politics, religion, sex, disability, age or sexual preference, who live, work or operate in the area described in Rule 2 and who are in agreement with the stated aims and objectives and will support the activities of TTB.
- (b) Any person, on completion of a Membership Form whether on paper or electronic shall thereby be a Member.
- (c) A Member shall cease to be a member if she/he:
 - (i) resigns; or
 - (ii) is requested to resign by three-quarters of Members voting to this effect; or
 - (iii) dies.

(d) Any Member who is expelled shall have the opportunity to defend themselves at an Extraordinary General Meeting where they shall have the fullest opportunity to answer any allegations made against them.

(e) A Friend of TTB shall subscribe to the general tenets of this constitution.

The revised constitution was proposed by John Bell and seconded by Seb Beloe. The constitution was adopted nem con.

There was discussion on charging for membership. It was agreed that if there is a need to raise funds for whatever reason, then asking members for a regular contribution would be one method of doing so.

Group Structure and Strategy

There was a discussion during the meeting where some of the frustrations of new and old members with the inclusivity and accessibility of the group were underlined.

Concerns included:

- Awareness of the town to the existence of the group
- Communication to those interested as to what it going on and how to get involved
- Decisions being made apparently by an inner group without consultation

During the Annual General Meeting of May 2012, a number of groups were formed, covering Outreach, Eco-teams, Celebration and Communication. Anyone who wanted to be involved with any of these groups was able to put their hand up and join – there were no restrictions.

The Communication Group (Trevor Davies, Jean Hayes, Bridget Wilkins and John Bell, and latterly also Seb Beloe, have been to meetings of this group) in particular was concerned with the issues as were re-raised during this meeting of 8 August. Most recently this involved a proposed new structure of TTB to better communicate what is going on and how decisions are being made and most importantly how people can get involved.

In outline form, the proposed new structure is as follows:

The proposed new structure follows the same pattern as other Transition Towns, for example Transition Town Lewes.

There will be a number of active groups plus a steering group concerned with the overall administration of TTB.

The Green Drinks will remain in place as a monthly social event, where you can be confident that a number of TTB Members will be present if you want to start a new initiative or quiz people about what has been going on.

The steering group is intended to be transparent, accessible and inclusive, and to look after the day-to-day running of TTB to allow members to concentrate on exciting new initiatives and projects, not getting bogged down in administration. The steering group will meet monthly as well but on a separate date to the Green Drinks. It will look after administration (including finances), ensuring new faces are followed up and welcomed, ensure that TTB is well represented in the local press and monitor the success of TTB against its strategy. The steering group will contain people with roles for each of the above, plus representation of the different groups. If anyone not normally on the steering group wishes to attend a meeting for any reason, then they can do so by letting any member of the steering group know. Meeting dates, agendas and minutes of the steering group will be available from the forum and on the digest (see below).

To allow people to communicate and understand what is going on, a new forum will be added to the website.

How to understand what is going on and how to fit in – the Forum

The web forum will be created at the start of September 2012.

The forum will contain a Category for each group. For example, there would be a Category for Outreach, Eco-teams, Celebration and Communication, plus Energy, Travel and Food. Each Category would contain Sub-Categories for each activity (E.g. the Outreach Category might have Sub-Categories for Ashlyns School and Building Community initiative). Members involved in each of the groups will be encouraged to communicate by posting to the forum rather than via e-mail, and to post dates, agendas and minutes of meetings on the forum for inclusivity. In this way a person new or on the fringes of TTB will be able to understand exactly what is going on and where the action is, and hence how to get involved.

For those without internet access, there will be a digest printed of the activity on the website, which will be posted or presented to such Members. They can also of course talk to someone involved. If such Members have a particular interest in one or more of the groups / topics, they can inform a member who does have internet access who will keep them abreast of activity.

To post to the forum people will require to have signed in to the site as a Member (the Membership form will be reproduced electronically for this purpose). Non-members will be able to view the content of the forum as a guest.

Members will also be able to start new groups or initiatives by starting new Categories, Sub-Categories and topics on the forum – the structure is therefore completely flexible and open. Those without the internet would need to involve someone with the internet in their initiative if they wanted others in TTB to be aware of it; or would need to bring it up in person at e.g. at the Green Drinks.

How other organisations and individuals “outside” of TTB can see how we fit in – the Strategy

It was proposed at the meeting of 8 August that a strategy will be formed. Historically a Strategy Group did exist and a lot of energy was put into thinking of strategy – so we want to avoid spending a long time over this this time round.

Therefore the strategy will be devised as follows:

- Small group will meet to propose the initial strategy on Weds 5 Sept. This will include Seb Beloe, John Bell, Rachel Turner and Bruce Nixon.
- A wider group of those interested (please let John Bell know if you would like to be involved) will review this initial strategy and provide feedback.
- The original small group will update the strategy, and then it will be adopted.

A key element of any strategy will be to ensure that TTB is open and allow anyone with the time to drive something through to be able to do so.

Next Meeting

The next Green Drinks will take place on 12 September at 8pm in the conference room at the Kings Arms, Berkhamsted.

Minutes taken by John Bell