

Annual General Meeting 2024

Good evening all, and many thanks to Ann who is stepping in to present this report on my behalf.

The past 12 months have continued to show that the Colchester Civic Society is a valuable contributor to the matters that are important to the city of Colchester, often going under the radar and occasionally bringing unfair, negative attention the Society.

I spoke last year about the Civic Society's work to encourage an exciting Masterplan for the town (now city) centre. This was an idea raised by Colchester Civic Society around 2 years ago. Unfortunately, despite much work by the Civic Society to alert the Council to the shortcomings of the current Masterplan, it has not been reconsidered, or reassessed. It sits there as a beacon of city centre progression for the next one hundred years!

Another issue the Society has been involved in over the past year was the quite amazing saga of the UPVC windows installed at 4 St Botolph's Street. This has worrying implications for how the historic fabric of the city centre is looked after in the future. In essence, it seems that if you are instructed by the Council's planning committee to adhere to a previous instruction you simply submit a retrospective planning application and even if this is refused by the planning committee then just submit another. Keep doing this until you get your way. Now this may cause people to chuckle, but it is extremely worrying. I ask you all, how strong is the current local planning documentation that is expected to protect the local historic fabric of our city? A final point to note is that the windows have yet to be painted.....

The proposed implementation of cycle lanes has also taxed the minds of members of the Civic Society. As part of a Government initiative, three cycle lanes were proposed to link the west and east of the city centre. This should not be confused with the existing national cycle lanes that successfully achieve such links already. However, the new proposals would be more visible and, rather than share space with pedestrians, would require reduction in both road and pedestrian space. The Civic Society, as you will all be aware, is a broad church and there were supporters and opponents to all three schemes. The approach the Society took was to try and highlight clear areas of difficulty for each of the schemes. Of course, other groups appeared to oppose, or support. The upshot is that the proposal for Crouch St West was halted with a review to take place, although I am unaware that anything has been brought forward yet. The East Hill proposal, which includes 'floating bus stops', is due to go ahead, but I am

unaware when work will start. Worryingly, there has recently been widespread press coverage that floating bus stops were considered to be dangerous. This included a call from the Royal National Institute of Blind People that visually impaired people risked stepping into the path of cyclists, something raised by the Civic Society as part of the East Hill consultation. The middle section, from Headgate to the High Street, has been delivered. As it opened fairly recently, it is unclear how successful this is proving to be. A question that might be asked is what the total cost of these works will be and what will/has happened to the funding which has not been used to deliver part of the original project.

An extensive response was provided by the Society on the St Botolph's roundabout proposal. This is another example of the cross section of opinion within the Society. Even I was a little surprised at the support for the current arrangements within the Society and outside, the argument being that those responsible for the upkeep had ignored their responsibility and this has led to the current dilapidated state that we see today, which then becomes an argument to completely overhaul the roundabout. I fully accept that the current roundabout does not work particularly well for people with disabilities, visual impairment - or cyclists. But it does suggest that insufficient consultation was undertaken, and let's be clear, changes to this roundabout have been mooted for more than a decade! Recently, we were asked for some help on the murals and where they might be kept in safe keeping during the works. The Society have reminded the Councils that these murals must be retained in the area for historic purposes. We have also suggested, very firmly, that the conservators we used to restore the murals should be engaged again to remove and re-site them. We were recently approached by a lady from the Henry Moore Foundation who is currently writing a book about Henry Collins and Joyce Pallot, the designers of the murals here and in other locations in the city, so it is clear that they play an important role in Colchester's history.

Continuing on the matter of the lack of maintenance or upkeep, I would like to touch on Holy Trinity churchyard, another project that has come out of the nemesis of Covid, which, it appears, was when this project was originally consulted upon. Apparently, the concerns raised by the Civic Society, that this will become a beacon of anti-social behaviour, have been dismissed by a number of councillors, and others, as simply ridiculous. Why? Because the current churchyard has been neglected and this proposed work will reinvigorate the place and be an outstanding tourist attraction! The churchyard has been neglected by the very people proposing to 'upgrade' it. Unfortunately, this lack of vision applies to a number of closed churchyards in the city centre. One wonders what Trinity churchyard might look like in ten years, or perhaps less.

Apologies that this report seems to be full of negativity, but I am trying to set out the kind of matters that members of your executive committee get themselves involved in and this takes up a good deal of time. This is not a complaint but I am merely pointing out the amount of work undertaken by those dedicated individuals. They should be loudly applauded for this selfless effort.

A recent piece of news has appeared from the Council which focusses on the city centre projects. This can be found on the following link

– www.colchester.gov.uk/citycentre/ . You will notice the opening page is headed “Discover Our Vision”, one which the Civic Society would not necessarily agree entirely with.

Members of the Society have been invited to, and attended, briefings by City Council Officers throughout the year, giving updates on the Town Deal and Levelling Up Funds. These updates are very useful for members and I would encourage them to take advantage of these events. I would like to express our thanks to council officers for giving up their valuable time to attend these events. It is much appreciated.

This evening you will be treated to a presentation about the One Square Mile project currently taking place at St John’s Green primary school. As I mentioned last year, this is a really good project and the Civic Society have been proud to support it from the very beginning. Ann Turner took a group of teachers on a guided tour of the area to help them with important information to relay back to the children. Jo attended the birthday party which she enjoyed enormously.

I advised members about a meeting a few executive committee members had with a Cambridge based architect on a proposal they were putting together to submit to Colchester Council planning for the former Odeon site. It was encouraging to see that their planning application was approved by the council. We await further updates with excitement.

Members will have noticed the work currently underway at St. Nicholas Square, which seems to be taking a long time. The Society still have concerns about how this might look when completed, as there are ownership arrangements that we believe will not allow the full square to be pedestrianised.

The Society have continued to liaise with The Jumbo Project and they are keen to hear the views of our resident experts, John Burton and Bob Mercer. This is not to diminish the experts that are part of that project. We all look forward to the day when the project completes and this iconic building can properly grace the Colchester skyline again and attract visitors to be amazed at the

Victorian engineering hidden within. In the meantime, the Society will be happy to contribute where necessary.

I have mentioned the executive members, as a group, already, but I would like to expand a little at this point.

Ann Turner – who has contributed so much to the Society and continues to do so as Membership Secretary and Vice Chair. I would like to suggest to the executive committee that Ann is offered a Vice President role as soon as the position of Chair has been resolved and she is able to step aside. Heritage Open Days is something that Ann relishes being involved in and I would like to thank Society members who helped steward the Roman Theatre in the Dutch Quarter, and the Audley Chapel at Berechurch during last year's event.

Bob Mercer – continues to ensure that comment is provided for the many planning applications that require his expert input. Recently Bob has come under a little bit of pressure from keyboard surfers that inhabit the comments section of the online Gazette. The individuals hide behind anonymous names and personas and should be treated with that in mind. Should they wish to attend a Civic Society coffee morning, they might learn something. Keep up the good work Bob. Bob also liaised with council planners on the proposed Marriot Hotel proposal at the Old Post Office. It is unclear at this stage what the position of this application might be, as approval for a similar hotel proposal at the old Odeon site has been given. The Society are occasionally asked to comment on other matters aside from planning applications. Last year Bob was tasked with reviewing a mineral extraction report submitted to the council by Tarmac, setting out their plans for mineral and aggregate at Stanway. No mean task indeed.

John Collett – continues to liaise with other partners and gets involved in litter picks throughout the city. Footpaths have taken much of John's time and as you can imagine this is definitely a long-term job. In fact, the 'Footpath to Nowhere' is still being looked at despite missing out on the planning gain from the nearby development.

John has been trying for a while to coordinate various groups to undertake a winter/spring clean throughout the city centre. It came to full fruition this year, with vast amounts of litter and fly tipping, normally hidden by vegetation, being collected. And a huge initiative took place in St Botolph's Priory where, during seven sessions of really hard work by Society members, residents and the Council, the area was cleared of rubbish and vegetation, trees lopped and small repairs undertaken. What a fabulous achievement! The Society has undertaken two Great British Spring Clean sessions and has given support to neighbourhood action days, again working with other partners. John's hard work in

coordinating all this brilliant work has just resulted in the award of a certificate of appreciation to the Society from Keep Britain Tidy year. Well done John.

Paul Weston – as always Paul keeps the finances of the Society under control. Thanks so much Paul. Paul has advised the executive committee that he will be standing down from his role in 2025.

Peter Evans – continues to keep an eye on public transport matters, but, as you will be aware, this remains a difficult remit as it seems the local council has no idea what is happening with this important 'public' service. Peter has more success with his work on the Civic Society newsletter, and I think we can all agree that is a huge success, especially the recent 60-anniversary edition. Peter does always try to make members aware of upcoming events via e-mail but we appreciate this isn't something that all members have access to. Street naming is also quite testing, but not quite as much as buses. Historically, this remit went quite smoothly, with the odd hiccup, however the recent communication about street names for the Essex County Hospital site, where the Society suggested some names of influential people who had been associated with the former hospital has been partially 'ignored' and it seems that we may well end up with Treatment Road, Vita Way and Wellness Walk - oh dear. Peter finally got the naming of a road in memory of former Mayor, Joyce Brooks, over the finish line. She had been the only former Mayor not commemorated, so well done, Peter. This road is also in her former ward, so it was worth the wait. One final thing on street naming, the Society have been asked by the council to help them check their own records, and those of the Library, on how streets got their names and what the historic link, if any, is.

Sheila Anderton – not only our eyes and ears reporting to the council all sorts of issues throughout the city; graffiti, broken paviers, unkempt vegetation.....the list goes on and she normally ensures matters are addressed quite quickly with help from the Council's Neighbourhood Teams. However, one that took a little longer was the replacement slab(s) to the front of Fenwick, but by sticking to the task this work has now been completed using the correct stone. But also, Sheila is the eyes and ears for the executive committee, ensuring minutes are kept for each meeting. Thank you, Sheila. You will all be aware that Sheila has a particular 'thing' about plastic ties that appear on lampposts and other fixed posts. These usually advise of planning applications, transport regulation orders and the like. They rarely get removed once the information is no longer needed. Well, the running total of ties collected to date and sent for recycling is 8,560! Sheila also organises the annual poppy knit and last year 160 poppies were knitted and sold by the Royal British Legion. We thank our volunteer knitters and crocheters.

John Salmon – I know synonymous with lampposts, but John works hard to provide feedback on those highway projects, through his coordinating role with the Highways Sub Group I was talking about earlier. If that was not keeping him busy enough he ensures the website is kept up to date too.

John Burton – our President, who is chairing this evening's meeting. John plays a very active day to day role too. John has engaged with partners on all those difficult projects covered earlier in this report and in addition works tirelessly on matters concerning the ongoing proposals at the former garrison, on which he has worked closely with Society member, Paul Knappett, on some exciting proposals.

Michael Fitt – The Society's secretary and has agreed to be somewhat more hands on whilst the executive committee has a review of workloads. This will be very helpful and is much appreciated, thank you Michael.

Glyn Barritt – Glyn joined the executive committee during the last year and has become a respected member, bringing some valuable experience. I expect that Glyn's involvement will be incredibly useful as the committee make some important decisions during the next year, indeed the upcoming Heritage Open Days is an area where Glyn will be taking over from Ann.

Jo Edwards - who as I have said previously, really is the beating heart of the Civic Society. Jo is involved in pretty much everything the Society is involved in (whether she wants to be or not!). Coffee mornings are a popular event run by the Society, usually attracting around 30 people each time. Some meetings welcome speakers on various topics, but recently the City Centre Police team have agreed to attend two meeting a year and this is very much appreciated. Other speakers have included Simon Taylor who spoke about city centre signage and city council officers who have taken the opportunity to consult us about Clean Air projects. One such project, Walking with Words, encourages students and others to walk between the University and the city centre. Jane Thompson from Colchester Council asked for our views. The project has now come to fruition and we have been given the charming booklet that accompanies it. Jo has arranged a series of visits post Covid, however demand has been difficult on some occasions. Recognising that this is a problem for a number of local societies, she has contacted them to suggest some joint outings. It's early days but there has been a very promising reaction. Many of the trips have used the Community 360 minibus and we are happy to support this local charity. Jo and others have liaised with the council on preserving the colour scheme once synonymous with the Dutch Quarter. It has been agreed and written into the deeds of one house that the colour scheme should be retained going forward. There is space on the garden wall of this house for an interpretation board to explain both this colour scheme

and the wider history of the Dutch Quarter, something that the Council would welcome, and the Society is in the early stages of a fundraising campaign to pay for it. Trees are another series of projects that Jo has inherited and I am pleased to say that a tree dedicated to former Mayor, Alderman, Civic Society Chair and Vice President, Ken Cooke was planted at Kings Meadow in the Spring. Sadly, the London Plane planted by the Society beside Southway House, near the corner of Headgate and Southway to commemorate Jean Lamb, who was our Newsletter Editor for many years, was so badly damaged in a storm during the Winter that it had to be felled. We will plant a replacement in the Autumn.

Ged Dickinson – is a lesser known participant of the Civic Society who continues to ensure the Civic Society is loud on X and Facebook. The Society now has 1,118 followers on X, a great achievement Ged, keep up the good work. Can I just add I am enjoying the recent pictures of lone traffic cones. I would also like to thank Ged for his work, with us, on the revised Constitution, which you have all seen, and will (hopefully) be approving this evening.

Pamela Bradley has taken over the more recent new plaques work, sorting out the Catharine Marsh plaque which is on the Co-Op Bank in High Street. The long-awaited Lock Hospital plaque will be unveiled the week after the AGM. The Civic Society has given advice on plaques in Wivenhoe and Dedham.

Member Julia Havis mentioned that the Colchester Arts Society mentioned, at a Coffee Morning, that their trail for children at Brightlingsea Church had been completed and they were looking for another project. The Civic Society have not created a Plaque Trail for the Castle Park as this was to be a project for the Rangers, but this seemed to be an 'offer' too good to miss. We took them up on it! Pamela, who is also an Arts Society Committee member, with help from Richard Arnopp, who maintains our online Plaque Trails and Civic Society member David Hibberd, who is also Chair of the Friends of Castle Park. worked with the Arts Society to produce a brilliant trail, incorporating some plaques but also buildings of interest. It's amazing what collaborative working can achieve.

A quick thank you to Adrian Rushton who is always ready to take photos of various events that the Civic Society organises.

The Civic Society was so pleased to be represented at an event at the Town Hall arranged by Society member, David York, to celebrate the life of Jonathan Penrose, born in Colchester and 10 times British champion and chess Grandmaster. The event was attended by members of his family. Jonathan's parents were the joint secretaries of the original Colchester Civic Society which began in the early 1930s but closed at the outbreak of the war. Later that

afternoon, the overhang Penrose Chess Park at the Mercury Theatre was opened. If you pop into the Mercury I believe they will provide chess sets to play on the tables adjacent to the city wall.

East Bridge has been a long-term project for the Society and has seen off a few Essex County Councillors, but finally that horrible barrier fence has gone and been replaced by rather better bollards. We would like to give our thanks to Cllr Lee Scott for his help on this matter, even though he had moved to a new portfolio when the work was complete.

Members will have been disappointed to read about the situation at Middle Mill and the collapsed weir. I fear this will be another matter that drags on for some time. The Society will continue to track progress.

The Society was one of a number of local charitable organisations to receive a bequest from Andrew Millar. This has been put on deposit and the interest will help sustain the Society's work. We are looking at how we might recognise the bequest in Andrew's memory.

On the subject of donations, the executive committee agreed a contribution to Sir Bob Russell's Twinkle Twinkle Little Star statue in the High Street. It is quite amazing what a popular attraction this has become in a short space of time! Well done Bob.

Civic Voice which acts an umbrella organisation for the country's Civic Societies finally resolved its financial issues. You may recall that a former finance officer had defrauded the organisation of a large amount of their funds and they had to drastically reduce both the number of employees and the amount of work they could undertake. The funds have been returned and this has meant they have been able to save Civic Voice and they are now rebuilding. The lobbying of Parliament and their newsletter of events about societies work up and down the country is invaluable.

It was a great pleasure to see Rosemary Jewers unveil an interpretation board at the site of the Roman Circus last autumn. This was something Rosemary had wanted to happen as a memory to her late husband, Tony. He had spent many hours watching various excavations in the area.

At the time of writing the anonymous post box has returned to Lexden Road, I believe it is still wrapped in its cummerbund but will need some new paint work before it is unveiled!

It has been fantastic to welcome new members to the Civic Society, but we must remember that several members have left us during the year. For those who have not renewed their membership we would like to think they will return at some point (especially if they start to miss the fabulous newsletter), to those who have passed on we thank them for being involved and bid them a fond farewell.

Almost there, just a couple messages of thanks. The neighbourhood team who have really stepped up with their help in connection with so many of the projects I have highlighted above and huge thanks, once again, to Greyfriars who host this event and many other events held by the Civic Society.

A few words about me. I reported last year that my role was one of support, with a very small 's', I also work full time. I have to admit the last year has been enjoyable, but mainly due to the incredible support of others. With external demands continuing I took the difficult decision to step down from the chair role and I know how this has added pressure to executive committee colleagues. I really have to step away for a while, which is not to say I will not keep tabs on goings on and hopefully will return to the committee at some stage in the future.

Wishing you all the best for the year ahead.

Howard



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

237885

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	1/1/2023	To	31/12/2023
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
DONATIONS	40858 -	-	-	40858 -	384 -
SUBSCRIPTIONS	2545 -	-	-	2545 -	2550 -
INTEREST	201 -	16 -	-	217 -	14 -
DEED OF GIFT	400 -	-	-	400 -	371 -
LAMP POST PROJ	-	742 -	-	742 -	300 -
SOCIAL EVENTS	567 -	-	-	567 -	878 -
SOCIAL EVENTS 2022 REFUND	111 -	-	-	111 -	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	44682 -	758 -	-	45440 -	4497 -
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	44682 -	758 -	-	45440 -	4497 -
Total receipts	44682 -	758 -	-	45440 -	4497 -
A3 Payments					
SUBSCRIPTIONS	297 -	-	-	297 -	297 -
INSURANCE	242 -	-	-	242 -	165 -
EXP OF MEETINGS	820 -	-	-	820 -	858 -
PAST/STAT/PRINTING	1270 -	-	-	1270 -	959 -
SUNDAY PAYMENTS	447 -	-	-	447 -	1026 -
WEB SITE FEES	208 -	-	-	208 -	218 -
LAMP POST PROJ	-	689 -	-	689 -	448 -
MURALS	-	66 -	-	66 -	84 -
SOCIAL EVENTS	574 -	-	-	574 -	974 -
Sub total	3858 -	755 -	-	4613 -	5743 -
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	3858 -	755 -	-	4613 -	5743 -
Total payments	3858 -	755 -	-	4613 -	5743 -
Net of receipts/(payments)	40824 -	3 -	-	40827 -	-1246 -
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	16735 -	1705 -	-	18440 -	19686 -
Cash funds this year end	57559 -	1708 -	-	59267 -	18440 -

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	CURRENT ACCOUNT	3933 -	-	-
	SOCIAL FUND ACCOUNT	1047	-	-
	DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	22549 -	-	-
	SPRING BURNING SOC	3000	-	-
	FOUNTAIN / J. JONES / WYMPYST MURALS	-	1708 -	-
	Total cash funds	57559 -	1708 -	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

OK OK OK

(agree balances with receipts and payments
account(s))



[illegible]

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

[illegible]

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities	DESIGN STREET NEWSLETTER	484	-	
	CO B/C MEETINGS	18	-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	MICHAEL FITT	10/6/24
	PAUL WESTON	10/6/24



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
COLCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

On accounts for the year
ended

31ST DECEMBER 2023

Charity no
(if any)

237885

Set out on pages

1 & 2

(Remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

T.P. Denny

Date:

28/3/2024

Name:

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

BSC (HONOURS) FINANCIAL SERVICES,
ASSOCIATE OF THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF BANKERS

Address:

34 REYNARDS COPSE
COLCHESTER, ESSEX,
CO4 9UR

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

**Give here brief details of
any items that the
examiner wishes to
disclose.**