



Minutes of SIGMA AGM Held on Friday 3rd June 2011

Present: Stan Barber (Chairman)
Andrew Reddy (Secretary)
Pete Sherman (Events Co-ordinator)
Stewart Argo (Committee Member)

Moira Barber, Stuart Brooks, Jean Chart, Robin Frankton, Chad Gray, Bill Leslie, Kelly O'Donnell, Jean Stocks, Helen Williamson, Karen Cox, Tim Schroder, George Morris, Alan Tough, George Miller, Celia Hawco, and Kay Stuart.

Total Present: 19 voting plus one non-voting.

Proxy/ Postal Votes: 8.

Item 1 - Welcome:

1. The chairman opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance on such a pleasant evening. The necessary quorum under paragraph 8.2 of the clubs constitution is 20% of the club (20% of 49 = 10), had been met with 19 members.

Item 2 - Apologies:

2. Apologies were received from the following: Duncan Gray, Barry George, Kevin Stocks, Rob Cox, Bill Ford, Chris Stradling, Chris Jennings, Gordon Grant, Mark Wynn, Stephen James, Brian Young, and Sam Hampton-Smith.

Item 3a - Minutes Of The Previous AGM:

3. The Minutes of The AGM of 2010 had been circulated prior the meeting, and only one minor amendment had been notified. There were two matters arising, the cancellation of the Club's 10th anniversary dinner due to poor uptake, and alternative funding which proved a non starter.

Resolution A11.1 To Accept the Minutes of the AGM 2010.

Proposed: Alan Tough Seconded: George Miller.

Voting: For 23 votes, Against 0, 4 Abstentions.

Item 3b - Minutes of The EGM held on 1st October 2010:

4. The minutes of the EGM of 1st October 2010 had been circulated prior to the meeting. There were no amendments.

Resolution A11.2 To Accept the Minutes of the EGM 2010.

Proposed: Stewart Argo Seconded: Pete Sherman.

Voting: For 22 votes, Against 0, 5 Abstentions.

Item 4 - Matters Arising From EGM Minutes:

5. The only matter arising from EGM Minutes was the introduction of the Proxy/postal vote. This had been brought in successfully for the AGM 2011.

Item 5 - Chairman's Report:

6. The Chairman read his report, and thanked all those who had helped with running the Club, at public events, with both opening and those on the committee who worked hard on behalf of members. The report is attached below.

Item 6 - Membership Secretary's Report:

7. The Chairman presented this report on behalf of the Membership Secretary, who was absent. The report is attached below.

Item 7 -Treasurer's Report:

8. The Chairman presented this report and balance of club accounts on behalf of the Treasurer who was absent. The report is attached below. There was a brief discussion on the figures and a later discussion on membership rates for 2012, which were kept at 2011 rates.

Resolution A11.3 To Accept the Accounts for 2010.

Proposed: Karen Cox, Seconded: George Morris.

Voting: Unanimous.

Item 8 – Programme for 2011/12

9. The Events Co-ordinator presented the programme detailing all the talks for July 2011 till December 2012. Members also praised the Committee's policy of securing quality external speakers, though this was in no way a reflection on local speakers who were also considered high quality. The Chairman thanked the Events Co-ordinator for his presentation and for his efforts in preparing the programme so far in advance as it was his efforts that were critical in securing top-quality speakers.

Item 9 – Resolutions A11.4 – 11.9:

Resolution A11.4 To Appoint Stanford Barber as Chairman.

Proposed: Helen Williamson, Seconded: Stewart Argo.

Voting: Unanimous.

Resolution A11.5 To Appoint Sam Hampton-Smith as Secretary.

Proposed: Tim Schroder, Seconded: Karen Cox.

Voting: Unanimous.

Resolution A11.6 To Appoint Chad Gray as Treasurer.

Proposed: Karen Cox, Seconded: Andrew Reddy.

Voting: Unanimous.

Resolution A11.7 To Appoint Stewart Argo, Bill Ford, Pete Sherman, Chris Stradling and Brian Young as Committee Members.

Proposed: Jean Stocks, Seconded: Jean Chart.

Voting: Unanimous.

Change To Paragraph 6.4 of The Constitution:

10. The Resolution was to amend Para 6.4 of the club's constitution. There was a brief discussion where the Chairman explained that audit was a specific term and it needed to be carried out by a qualified auditor. As the Club had an income around £1000 per annum it neither needed nor could afford an auditor. A member confirmed by reference to another club, that the cost of hiring an auditor was significant.

Resolution A11.8 To Change Para 6.4 of the Constitution to Read:

The committee shall keep proper records of the accounts that shall be used to provide an annual Statement of Accounts that shall be independently inspected following the end of each financial year by any inspector independent of the committee

Proposed: Bill Leslie, Seconded: Stuart Brooks.

Voting: Unanimous.

Application for Charitable Status.

11. The Chairman presented the case for the Club applying for charitable status. A number of astronomy clubs were already registered charities. As a charity the Club should be able to claim back VAT and tax through Gift Aid, which amounted to around 10% of annual income, it should be eligible for free rates, and additional funding options would open up as many would donate only to registered charities. The Club needed to produce a constitution acceptable to OSCR that would be larger than the present one, but our own already contained the main elements. There were 4

categories of registered charity and that of an Unincorporated Association was felt to fit best with Club requirements. Karen Cox advised that it might be possible to reclaim Gift Aid retrospectively for up to 3 years. The Chairman undertook to bring the proposal back to the membership through an EGM should he run into any unforeseen problems, or issues outwith the spirit of the resolution.

Resolution A11.9 To Apply for Charitable Status through OSCR as an Unincorporated Association.

Proposed: Bill Leslie, Seconded: Tim Schroder.

Voting: Unanimous.

Item 10 – AOCB

12. There were no motions presented to the secretary prior to the meeting. Bill Leslie asked the chairman to clarify the policy for speaker's gifts. The Chairman advised that this had been discussed in Committee on a number of occasions. In 2009 a number of engraved single and double whisky tumblers sets had been purchased to give an option for a gift dependent on the talk. However, after consideration of the Club's balanced income/ expenditure it had been agreed that all speakers would be given a single engraved whisky glass, with double sets being broken down.

13. Bill Leslie and Karen Cox also queried thoughts behind the mobile planetarium. The Chairman explained that the idea had arisen because of the number of public events cancelled due to poor weather, the success of basic mobile planetarium shows during the Club's IYA 2009 events, and the success of the Outreach programme with schools. An observatory had been considered but it had been felt to be too restrictive as it needed a proper site, it still needed good weather, it could accommodate only a few at a time, and it needed funding throughout the year.

14. A planetarium had been procured at no charge for the December 2010 Geminid Meteor Event at Lhanbryde and had proved a big hit with the public. It used Stellarium software, was about 8 metres across, accommodated some 35 adults or 40+ children, and it could also be used monthly at Club meetings. It could be carried, set up and operated by a single person with a medium hatchback or similar car. A version weighing in at some 150kg had been dismissed as impractical. Investigations through the Big Lottery Fund and Project LEADER suggested that the planetarium might get funding but it would require a number of other partners to raise the £25,000 plus that was needed to procure it.

15. The Club would be expected to contribute 5% of costs, but this amount was notional and could be made up by including work by members to prepare the bid. The main problem was the current financial crisis, which meant that funds for such activities through all grant-making bodies was limited, but this was not considered a reason not to progress the project.

16. There being no other business the AGM was closed at 9.09pm

A REDDY Secretary (Outgoing)

Chairman's Report AGM 2011

Activities

1. After the frenetic efforts of 2009 and the International Year of Astronomy (IYA), we held back from public events at the start of the year though we continued our Outreach programme with schools and clubs.
2. We started public events again with an observing session in September at the bothy, where we managed an hour or so between intermittent cloud cover, with around 15 members of the public. In contrast, we had an outstanding session at Nethybridge in October with over 100 members of the public and as well as making star wheels we got about an hour of viewing, though telescopes were in short supply. Finally, we held an event for the annual Geminid meteor shower but this time at Lhanbryde Community Centre, as we felt the A96 would be better cleared, the car park was flat hard core, it had 2 halls and was in a population centre. That said, it was again cloudy, but as well as a talk we had procured a mobile planetarium demonstration at no cost, and this made up to a significant degree for the lack of observing, with over 60 of the public attending. We also conducted Outreach activities with a number of clubs, particularly cubs, brownies and scout groups.
3. Our Club talks were given by a mix of external speakers and members' and were of the high standards we've come to expect. Winter weather disrupted both the beginning and the end of the year with the January meeting and December Quiz Night cancelled due to snow and ice. Finally, SIGMA's 10th anniversary was marked with a cake-cutting ceremony after the AGM, with Tim doing the honours as one of the 4 founder members. A planned 10th anniversary dinner was cancelled due to a lack of uptake from members.

Membership

4. Despite publicity from the IYA 2009 events, membership declined in 2010 though it was hard to pin down any one reason. If we believed in cause and effect then we'd have stopped all public events, but I'm convinced it's these events and our Outreach programme that are primarily responsible for enticing new members.

Financial

5. Though this will be covered by the Treasurer's report in essence we covered our costs in 2010 without having to dip into reserves and the financial state of the Club as at 1 January 2011 could be described as healthy and sustainable.

Logo

6. It was felt that there was scope for some cleaning up of the logo and we were fortunate to have the help of Sam Hampton-Smith, who has produced an update to a previous version, which (if you can excuse the pun) has met with universal approval.

Record of Thanks

7. I should like to place on record my thanks to a number of people for their hard work and unwavering support over the year. First of course are the members who faithfully turn up at meetings, with the record being two thirds of the membership at one. Then there's your Committee

who do so much running around and organising from Committee meetings, to both openings, to public events

8. I'd also like to thank members Celia, Kaye, Moira, Tim, Gordon, Barry, Karen and Rob, Kevin and Jean who have helped out at public events and those who continue to provide help, advice and images, Bill and Alan in particular. Without the work of Committee and members SIGMA would struggle to exist and to provide a vehicle to promote astronomy and science to a wide audience.

9. I'd also like to thank Andrew Reddy for his efforts over the last 7 years, from the tea service, through space news, to his work on the Committee latterly as secretary. Seven years is more a sentence and people have got off with a far more lenient punishment even for jokes as bad as the ones he's told.

10. I'd also like to thank Sam, Helen and Tim for their efforts as co-opted volunteers with the website and in particular Sam for his work on the logo.

11. It's dangerous to mention names as the chance of missing someone out is always pretty much guaranteed. If I have missed anyone then you have my humble apologies.

Membership Secretary's Report

1. There was a further slight decline in membership at the start of this year, though people who decided not to renew assured me that it was nothing to do with the change in membership fees. We now have 55 members made up of 39 Full, 3 Life, 7 Concessionary, 1 student and 5 children. The comment has been made by a number of clubs that membership has declined over the last couple of years so we are no different. However, we can all play our part in encouraging friends to come along as we still operate the 'try before you buy' policy as the first meeting is free.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Fees for 2012

1. The Club's income exceeded expenditure by just under £20, which was predicted as the most likely outcome at last year's AGM. Major items can be seen in this Statement of Accounts Sheet with membership income down nearly £200 from 2009 and that, as the Chairman has pointed out, after all the efforts and publicity from the 5 IYA events. Other items remained fairly static though the difference in management costs from 2009 to 2010 largely the result of the bulk purchase of speaker's gifts in 2009. The accounts were independently inspected and found to be in accordance with the information supplied by Anne Burgess.

2. The forecast for 2011 is very similar to 2010 with income and expenditure likely to be balanced, once one off capital expenditure is taken into account. Membership fees are to be kept at the 2011 rates for 2012.