
Minutes

Meeting RIBA West Midlands Regional Forum
Date 23 June 2009
Venue The John Osborne Room, RIBA West Midlands, Birmingham & Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham
Present Dhiran Vagdia (in the Chair) (DV)
Greg Brunt (GB)
Ray Bullen (RB)
Craig Callingham (CC)
Barrie Hall (BH)
Kevin Singh (KS)

In Attendance Matthew Dobson (MD)
Amanda Evans (AE)

1.0 Apologies Olly Brock (OB)
Izham Che Dan (IC)
Anthony Clerici (AC)
Amanda Harmer (AH)
Malcolm Hay (MH)
Anthony Lloyd (AL)
Victoria Poole (VP)
Mark Rizk (MR)
Noel Street (NS)
Helen Wootton (HW)

2.0 **Matters Arising from Minutes of Meeting of 17 March 2009 and Approval of Minutes**

2.1 Minute 3.2: Delegations Review
GB had written his summary of the Delegations Review and Forum members had been sent notice of the RIBA Special General Meeting to be held at 66 Portland Place on 15 July 2009 at 2 p.m and the link for the voting paper. DV stressed that members needed to be reminded of the importance of voting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March were approved.

3.0 **Report from Dhiran Vagdia, Regional Chairman**

DV spoke to his report and mentioned that he had now been in post for one year.

4.0 **Report from Matthew Dobson, Head of Region**

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- 4.1 Birmingham Past, Present, Future
MD reported that this event, held at the Botanical Gardens, had been a very successful event with over 260 delegates attending. There had been a reasonable amount of media coverage and it was hoped to repeat the formula of the event at Portland Place in the future with RIBA London Region.
- 4.2 N & R Council, Cardiff
MD reported that the announcement that Richard Hastilow was standing down was made at this meeting. A recruitment agency has been engaged to identify a successor and it was hoped the new Chief Executive would be in place by October.
- 4.3 RIBA Awards 2009
MD reported that West Midlands had three Award winners as follows:
Bournville Place by Stanton Williams

Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College by Nicholas Hare Architects LLP

The Pavilions by Ross Sharpe Architects Ltd

The Awards were presented at the very successful BAASH held on 22 May 2009 at Aston Business School, Birmingham
- 4.4 Changes to Job Structures and Regional Office
MD spoke on the changes to job descriptions and titles within the regional office. The titles are as follows:

Amanda Evans – Regional Services Co-Ordinator
Sue Spencer – Bookshop and Office Manager
Stacey Toth – CPD and Communications Co-Ordinator

DV asked for these names, titles and responsibilities to be put on the email bulletin.
- 4.5 Birmingham House
MD reported on his meeting with Birmingham City Council who are looking to promote the initiative of the 'Birmingham House' with a design for a series of medium rise houses on a canal side site in the City Centre.

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- 4.6 Private Confidence in Public Recovery
MD reported on the lively debate held in Solihull on 2 June 2009. The debate received good press.
- The regional office is in the process of organising the Great Regional Debate which will be held in January 2010. Members of the Forum were asked to inform the regional office of any ideas for topics. **ALL**
- 4.7 West Midlands Construction Task Force
- RIBA is now involved in WMCTF which is a group set up to respond to recession. MD to report as the project develops.
- 4.8 RSAW/NW Visit to West Midlands
MD reported that staff from RSAW and NW regions had met with the regional team on Thursday, 18 June and had had a tour of the Cube building site. Plans were underway to meet again in Cardiff later in the year. It is hoped that these meetings will enable the 3 regions to work more closely together and share knowledge.
- 4.9 Student Representative
It was reported that Anju Farmah from the Birmingham School of Architecture was now a member of the Education and Outreach Group. KS suggested that if a student representative was on Council it may help if there were timed items.
- 4.10 E-bulletin/Website
The first edition of the newly formatted email bulletin had been sent out earlier in June.
- MD reported that the website set up to promote Birmingham, Past, Present, Future was still running and the Region is keen to develop it as an additional RIBA website. It will be redesigned over the summer and will be used to promote events. MD asked Branches to feed information to the office and it could be put on the events calendar. Branches to be reminded of this website. **Regional Office**
- 5.0 **Report from Working Groups and Branches**
- 5.1 Education & Outreach Group
MD reported that at its meeting on 13 May 2009

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Mike Dring had given an update on the Birmingham School of Architecture.

KS reported that the Rep project was all running smoothly. Workshops were happening at the moment. Students would be going to Holland and it was hoped that the launch would be held in November.

DV ask KS to provide a couple of sentences on the project for the next email bulletin. **KS**

MD reported on the CPD contract between West Midlands and East Midlands for the 2010 – 2012 session. This replaces the Northern Network..

MD reported that the office was working on a proposal with Business Link to run an RIBA accredited CPD programme on the theme of sustainability. Business Link may fund a 6 part course for RIBA members and others.

The next meeting of the Education and Outreach Group will be held on 1 July 2009.

5.2

Communications, including AREA magazine

KS reported on the progress with the new AREA magazine. Each issue will be themed. The first meeting of the focus group had gone well and the PR company now had a clear idea of what sort of advertising, style and graphs were required, with a strong emphasis on quality.

The first issue would be released in October.

MD reported that it all relies heavily on securing one major sponsor or a lot of smaller ones. Clarkes, the PR company have had various discussions with possible sponsors.

There was a discussion on having a campaign to inform members of the re launch of AREA.

DV asked if the dates for AREA and the E-bulletin could be put on the Regional Forum Agenda and if a short note with points from the Regional Forum meeting could be sent to the membership. **Regional Office**

MD – Review of what RIBA has been doing over the year for AREA. **Regional Office**

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6.0 Matters for Decision

6.1 Feasibility Study for John Osborne Room

There was a discussion regarding the Feasibility Study paper by Gavin Willetts. It was felt that in order for the room to be used for small events, one off lectures, exhibitions, meetings etc it needed to have blinds, powerpoint screens and internet access.

Adrian Passmore and MADE have shown an interest in the tables/chairs.

It was suggested that the tables and chairs could be moved to another room in the BMI when they were not needed.

BH stressed the need for stringent house rules.

It was agreed to go ahead with first three recommendations of the feasibility study.

6.2 Political Update/Ian Austin Meeting

DV reported that he and MD had met with Ian Austin MP on 22 May 2009. The topics discussed were the impact the current economic climate is having on architects in the West Midlands, support for students of architecture during the recession, practical and local solutions that can help mitigate the impact the recession is having on RIBA members and the construction industry and how can the public sector re-invigorate projects that have stalled and what measures can be taken to help retain the focus and skills of architects as they are being made redundant.

Mr Austin was very positive and very receptive to all that was said. He was eager to make sure the problem of graduate retention was addressed and resolved and interested in learning more about where practices have stalled so that he could try to reactivate them. He listened to suggestions about redeploying architects that have been made redundant in the West Midlands.

MD reported that following a recent cabinet re-shuffle, Ian Austin is now Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and retains his duties as Minister for the West Midlands.

BH reminded the regional office that a congratulations letter would be appropriate. MD stated that HQ is keen for the

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region to keep the relationship going.

DV mentioned that the regional office needed to touch base with Ian Austin's office again in a few months. BH requested that the item was kept on the Agenda. **Regional Office**

6.3

Dinner 2009

There was a discussion about the possibility of hosting a Dinner later this year. MD felt that after listening to feedback from larger practices and due to the economic climate, the Region should not hold a Dinner this year but may visit the idea again for May or June 2010. MD mentioned that the region are looking into a party in the park in September and also a Christmas event, similar to that held last year which would be aimed at members.

Regional Office to check Ruth Reed's diary for May/June 2010. **Regional Office**

6.4

Fee Bids

There was a discussion about the email sent to members from Sunand Prasad, President, RIBA regarding unrealistic fee bids. GB said architects in Hereford were concerned. They were putting in realistic fees bids but were nowhere near. DV suggested the region sent a letter to every authority in the Region and to public sector agencies informing them of our concern. CC said the RIBA fee guidelines needed to be tightened up. He also felt that care was needed in how this was communicated to the outside world.

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7.0

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Regional Forum will be held on Tuesday, **22 September 2009**. Time and venue to be announced. This will be followed by AGM.

Dates and Times of 2009 Forum meetings

Regional Forum

22 September 2009 and AGM
1 December 2009
16 March 2010
15 June 2010

RIBA Council

6 October 2009
8 December 2009
25 March 2010
24 June 2010

Signed:

Dated: