

General Assembly Meeting Minutes, 13th October 2021

10.00am, Hybrid meeting – Venue: The Studio, 7 Cannon Street, Birmingham, B2 5EP and Virtually via ‘Big Marker’

Chair: Wei Yang, RTPI President 2021

In- Person attendance: Andrew Taylor; Adele Maher; Adrian Brown; Alexander Oxley; Alison Blom-Cooper; Christine Naylor; David Carlisle; David Lowin; David Stovell; Gabrielle Appiah; Garry King; Helen Fadipe; Janet Askew; Joanne Harding; John Powell; Judith Onuh; Carol Ramsey; Kirsty Macari; Laura Archer; Layla Vidal-Martin; Lindsey Richards; Mark Hand; Maria Dunn; Mark Southgate; Michael Vout; Nicky Linihan; Niall Byrne; Olafiyinfoluwa Taiwo; Rebecca Dewey; Robyn Prince; Sarah Platts; Stefano Smith; Timothy Crawshaw; Samer Bageen;

Virtual attendance: Sue Bridge; Bernadette Hillman; Meeta Kaur; Tom Venables; Andrew Trigger; Kirsty Macari; Claire Hepher-Davies; Bob Chilton, Barbara Cummins; Alice Lester; Peter Geraghty; Lubiana Mirza; Cath Ranson; John Collins; Nick Smith; Atefeh Motamedi; Andrew Coleman; Adam Banham; Liz Wood-Griffiths; Laura Webster; Atefeh Motamedi; Giuseppe Zanre; Claire Hepher-Davies; Tola Amodu; Peter Geraghty; Lubaina Mirza; John Collins; Cath Ranson; Nick Smith; Laura Webster; Martin Edwards; Nadeem Ahmed; Andrew Martin; Niall Byrne; Gavin Lewis; Carol Ramsey; Lynette Swinburne; David Carlisle; Paul Bateman

Apologies for absence: Tola Amodu, Jennifer Winyard; Sue Manns, Katherine Green, Lucy Seymour-Bowdery; Emily Kitching; Sean Taylor; Harry Quartermain; Richard Patrick (Chief Operating Officer); Simone May (Governance Officer)

In attendance: Victoria Hills (Chief Executive); Sukhpreet Bhatia (Governance Manager); Andrew Close (Director of Education); Simon Creer (Director of Communications); Craig McLaren (Director of Scotland & Ireland); Roisin Willmott (Director of Wales & Northern Ireland); Professor Neale Blair (Guest Speaker); Bob Chilton, Chair of Audit Committee; Jo Russell, Director

S. No.	Agenda Items
1.	<p>Welcome message by the President of RTPI and the Chair of General Assembly, Wei Yang</p> <p>The President and Chair welcomed everyone to the first hybrid General Assembly meeting.</p> <p>The Chair reported that Sue Manns, Immediate Past President tendered her apologies for the meeting who was involved in a public inquiry.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated Sue Bridge, Chair of the Board of Trustees who has been elected the Vice President for 2022 and would be the President for 2023. Unfortunately, Sue couldn't be at the meeting in person due to a recent injury, but she was joining the meeting virtually.</p> <p>The Chair gave an overview of the agenda for the day.</p> <p>The two breakout group discussion sessions (one in the morning and one in the afternoon), had been divided into groups. Each group would be led by a Trustee.</p>

	<p>The President had been busy visiting the RTPI's regions in person, so far, she had visited the East Midlands (Lincoln), Yorkshire (Northallerton, Richmond), London (Redbridge, Walthamstow, Barking and Dagenham,, Kent. Local leaders really appreciated the Planning Profession, and it was a good opportunity to promote the Apprenticeship Scheme to councils and to get more people to join the RTPI as a member. Some councils are already using the apprenticeship scheme and there are some young planners which come from a very diverse and under privileged background. Over the coming months the President would be visiting the Southwest, West Midlands, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Northeast.</p> <p>The President had spoken at the RTPI Planner Live events in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales using the opportunity to collaborate with other professional institutes such as the Landscape Institute, Chartered Institute of Housing, ICE to show and how all institutes could work together providing unilateral thinking and promote planning. Internationally she had spoken at the UN Habitat Conference to promote women's role in planning.</p> <p>She had also been involved in judging and presenting awards for COP26, Inside Housing Awards and the Construction Industry Awards. The Chief Executive and the President had attended the Conservative Party Conference, with a very busy schedule meeting with Ministers and local leaders.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Board, Sue Bridge to introduce her report.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>BOT Chair's Report followed by Questions</p> <p>The BOT Chair, Sue Bridge apologised to the GA members for not being able to attend in-person due to an injury that she had obtained.</p> <p>The Chair advised the GA members that she was taking her report as read but she had one update on the report regarding the changes to the Constitution. She advised the GA members that there had been informal contact with the Privy Council and that there was a reasonable expectation that the Constitution would be ready before the next election cycle in 2022.</p> <p>A question was raised from a member representing the Southwest region who were concerned with the governance of GA and its relationship to the Board and there was concern that this power was being taken away.</p> <p>The Chair reported that there had been discussions via email with the Chair of RMB and the issues raised. The legal advice given that it didn't add anything and was more a functional matter and the functions of the RTPI were dealt with under the byelaws. The Chair also reported that the GA had not been fulfilling its function and several sessions had already been explored as to how the GA can become bolder and more empowered and to start doing what it was intended to do when the GA was created in 2003.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the investment in the London office and what the future held for the building. The Chief Executive reported that the RTPI was in a fantastic position because the building had been purchased in 2000. The building needed significant updating which was an investment worth making at this time. The members of the General Assembly will be monitoring this very carefully and that there are two trustees who will be sitting on the program board and will be answering to the board on the progress of the works.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Chief Executive’s Report, including CSIP and COVID update</p> <p>The Chief Executive stated that she was taken her report as read but just wanted to raise a few points to GA members.</p> <p>The report was set out with the four pillars of the strategy, but attention was drawn to a couple of groups, ‘Plan the World We Need’ which was launched last year and continued to win awards. The Planner magazine also recently won an award for providing interactive resources for their members. COP 26 Hub had now been launched gathering all the climate change planning activity.</p> <p>The ‘Pipeline of planners’ student research programme, which represents Stage 1 of CSIP project Education for Everyone was now complete. An independent advisor will be commissioned for Stage 2 of the project to review accreditation policies and processes next year.</p> <p>The GA members noted the report.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>GA Debate in physical and virtual breakout groups: The Role and Function of the General Assembly 1</p> <p>The GA members broke into breakout discussion groups.</p> <p>The discussion notes have been sent to the President and Chair of the Board for record. This will inform future GA discussions on functional matters after forthcoming ballot of members in January 2022 on the changes to the constitution.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Update from Committee Chairs: Finance Committee Chair – Andrew Taylor Audit Committee Chair – Bob Chilton</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance Committee, AT gave the General Assembly members an update on the Finance committee, this was his first update given to the General Assembly since its formation in 2020. The Finance Committee was set up as a Committee of the Board. It was not one of the Standing Committees and its membership was drawn from three people from the Board, including the independent trustee with financial experience and external people from the Board. The Finance Committee looks at the financial performance of the Institute. The Finance Committee had also looked at the monitoring of the RTPI reserves and investments, where the reserves are designated into certain funds and the Finance Committee’s role was to ensure the funds were being spent appropriately in accordance with expectation. Over the past couple of meetings the Committee had been looking at management accounts and investment updates and the committee made a decision in terms of moving money from funds that the committee were not happy with to two more sustainably balanced funds. He reported that the Committee were very much focussed on the running of the Institute’s business rather than the outward facing policy.</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee, BC gave the General Assembly member an update on the Audit Committee. BC reported that the role of the Audit Committee</p>

	<p>was to ensure the integrity of the RTPI accounts, it's processes and policies and look at things like value for money. He reported that the 2020 audit conducted by external auditors, Hayes McIntyre had given a very clean audit report. The auditors had conducted this audit during the pandemic and there had been less testing than normal but sufficient to agree a clean audit report. One of the issues that had been addressed as part of the annual audit was 'going concern' which meant that the period must look at least 18 months ahead and make a judgement as to whether the organisation is viable through that period. The Committee had also reviewed the annual report for 2020 and the view of the Audit Committee was that there was still further work to be undertaken. The view of the Committee was that instead of having one formal report was a document that dealt with the accountability to the membership and a promotional document. BC also reported that the Committee would be considering the RICS report and their internal audit report and seeing if there are any lessons to be learnt and transported. The Committee were also currently reviewing the policies and practices of the organisation to ensure that these were correct and up to date.</p> <p>The Chair extended an invitation to all women on the General Assembly to join the Audit Committee as the Committee was currently an all-male committee.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Planning Aid England Widening Engagement Programme Slides</p> <p>The Director of Wales and Northern Ireland gave an update to the General Assembly members on the activity of Planning Aid England Widening Engagement Programme.</p> <p>She advised the GA members that the work that Planning Aid England do have changed, in the past the team was focused on government contracts, this is no longer being done. There are four key areas of work that the team are currently working on. Volunteers were really a key to the work that Planning Aid England do, there are 250 Planning Aid England volunteers who are members which deliver most of the activity. A survey was recently undertaken, and it highlighted a diverse range of expertise available which was really valuable. There are four work streams which work is organised under. The first one was PAE Direct, and this comes in two forms there is the email advice service that's been running for about 3 years and demand has increased for this service quite a lot. The casework is very popular with volunteers. During the pandemic this was slightly more difficult to do. But this service focuses those who are underrepresented in the planning system and deprived areas of groups, and this relates to the RTPI's Corporate Strategy, for example, the CHANGE program. The second area of work is PE engagement which is essentially the materials that there are to promote wider engagement. There is an RTPI training masterclass and learning module and there are a new range of podcasts available as well. The podcasts give people information on how to engage, for example, how to speak at a planning committee. The third area of Planning Aid is consulting which focuses on major projects, where information and advice is provided to community parish council on how they can get involved and whether there are any issues that they can comment on.</p> <p>The GA members noted the slides presented.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>RTPI Annual General Meeting</p> <p>Please see separate minutes.</p>

8.	<p>Outstanding Services Award presented by Wei Yang</p> <p>Wei Yang presented Outstanding Services Award to Tony Crook and Maria Dunn.</p>
9.	<p>Presentation by the incoming Vice President 2022</p> <p>The newly elected Vice President for 2022 SB gave a presentation to the General Assembly members. She thanked the members for electing her as the next Vice President.</p> <p>As President, she would continue to highlight the impact of place-based inequalities and to champion the role of the RTPI's members providing holistic, integrated, and well-resourced solutions at the neighbourhood as well as the strategic level.</p>
10.	<p>GA Debate: The Future of the Planning Profession 3: Planning education, research and practice</p> <p>A prequestionnaire was sent to GA members in advance. GA members' feedback was verbally reported by the President. The feedback was sent to RTPI Director of Education & Profession to inform the forthcoming Education and Research Strategy.</p> <p>A pre-recorded video presentation was played from Dr Neale Blair the Chair of Planning Schools Forum giving an overview of planning education and planning practice. The President requested a special thank you and a round of applause from GA members for Dr Blair's contribution to the GA while he was unwell. The video has also been sent to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee for noting.</p> <p>The discussion was carried out in physical and virtual breakout groups. Feedback from each group was given to the GA verbally, and a summary note from each group was submitted to inform the forthcoming Education and Research Strategy.</p>
11.	<p>COP26 Update</p> <p>The General Assembly noted a report giving an update on COP26 update and were asked to consider any activities being undertaken that can be included in the RTPI COP26 programme.</p> <p>The Director of Scotland and Ireland reported to the GA members regarding a range of events, social media and publications which had been created in the run up to the COP26 conference. A new COP26 Hub had been launched and this will outline RTPI activities before and during COP26 and to also act as a 'library' of publications, research, events, or media channels.</p> <p>Arrangements had been made to allow the RTPI Presidential team and key staff to be in Glasgow between Monday 8 November and Thursday 11 November. This includes World Town Planning Day and the day themed around Cities, Regions, and the Built Environment. Opportunities to meet with key policy makers, influencers and partners at the sessions were being explored during the time at the summit.</p>
12.	<p>Closing words from RTPI 2021 President Wei Yang</p>

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the GA meeting and their contribution in 2021.

A special thank you was recorded to GA members who finish their terms at the end of 2021:

- Gavin Lewis
- Barbara Cummins
- Andrew Coleman
- Garry King
- Alexander Oxley
- Nadeem Ahmed
- Mark Hand
- Cath Ranson
- Adam Banham
- Adrian Brown
- Claire Hepher-Davies
- Harry Quartermain
- Liz Wood-Griffiths
- Nick Smith
- David Carlisle
- Christine Naylor

The Chair closed the meeting.

Approved,

Chair,
Wei Yang
President