

FRIENDS OF QUEENS PARK
Annual General Meeting - Tuesday 21st October November 2014

M I N U T E S

1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Committee member Chris Cooke, from Park Warden Lindsay Cattnach and from Friends Helen Walker and Denise and Harvey Tilden.

2. Minutes of 2013 AGM

Johnny apologised for the Minutes of the previous year not being available due to illness and they will be posted in due course.

3. Report from the Chair

Johnny summarised by saying that the Friends have been working on three main themes this year:

- a. More participation from a wider group in the Community
- b. The beginning of the Council Consultation process
- c. Increased social activity via Twitter, Facebook etc., with about 500 Facebook followers, over 700 Twitters, a mailing list of around 200, and many thousands hitting the web page. Thanks to Susie, Conrad and Crispin for all their work on these.

Events summary:

Wild Garden Clean Up 2013:

This was very well attended, and combined nature, community and cake!

Carols in the Park 2103:

This event was located around the Tennis Pavilion instead of the clock tower as in previous years, and worked very well. Thanks to the Salvation Army.

Bark in the Park:

Bark in the Park 2014 was very well attended. This was our 2nd year of sponsorship from Coastway Vets. There were two show rings this year. The event continues to grow and be supported by local businesses. Special thanks to Crispin for everything he has done for the event.

Shakespeare in the Park:

We were nervous about booking Shakespeare again, partly because of fears about the weather, and partly because Fiona and Owen, who organised it in previous years, did not wish to do so again. Conrad however stepped in and it was a roaring success, with a 300 plus audience. We did a different deal with Illyria which reduced the financial risk for FOQP. Well done and thanks to Conrad for championing this event.

We are considering all options for 2015 productions, and have been in touch with Illyria and with Shakespeare's Globe in London.

Picnic in the Park:

The entertainment in general was professionalised this year. It was felt that there was a good mix of stalls and that overall it was a successful event.

Unfortunately there were issues over a missing alcohol licence due to a misunderstanding with the Round Georges who ran the bar, and the bar was consequently shut down before the end of the event. This dented the profits.

We now realise that because the event is much bigger than it used to be, we have crossed thresholds for various permits, paperwork etc. The learning is that we will have to work much more closely with the Police and the Council, well in advance of future events, to make sure that everything is put in place correctly.

Consultation process:

Jim Alison and Tom Hardiment had intended to come and present on the Consultation but were unable to be with us, so the information from them was read out by Guy.

“The Consultation process started in April. 127 responses were received from people who went to the pre consultation exhibition event at St Luke’s Church.

This was followed by the event in May at the Tennis Pavilion, where there were some robust debates, demonstrating that people are passionate about the Park.

These were fed into the full Consultation which was launched by Jim and Tom at Bark, accompanied by a mail out to 2000 homes. There were 268 responses, which Jim and Tom said is a good response level. Opinion was definite on some points, and split on others, as expected.”

At the moment we are just talking about what will happen as the next step, but there will be another 6 month bloc of open ended consultation on the master plan.

Details will be available on the Council consultation site and the FOQP website.

Pond Update:

In February a £1000 sustainability grant for lilies to protect the pond was applied for. This was granted, and the Friends of Queens Park match funded this. Well done and thanks to Chris Lowe and Chris Cooke for putting together the applications.

Chris Lowe gave the following report on Pond activities over the year:

“There was a “Help the pond day” on a Sunday in August, which was attended by a dozen people, who put in a lot of effort' building planting cages and going into the pond in waders to plant lilies and pond marginals and clear duckweed, etc. Thank you to all of them.

Lindsay ran a session with 12 Brighton college students on their 'Make a difference day' who worked terrifically hard shifting a lot of duckweed.

Chris supported Lindsay on her regular Tuesday afternoon volunteer sessions. They plan to reschedule this to also give opportunities for people to volunteer at week-ends.

Chris sought specialist advice on duckweed clearance including a quote for £12,000 which was sent to the Council as a way of helping to establishing the range of options available whilst knowing that the amount needed would probably be beyond what they could offer.

City Parks confirmed that they would not be able to fund this level of work but thought that 'there could be some elements of the work we could do in the future'.

The basic problem is that the duckweed expands exponentially. In autumn it drops to the bottom of the pond and stays, re-emerging the following year. In order to solve the problem, we need better equipment (we recently designed and trialled some very effective booms); we need to focus management of the duckweed in the spring and autumn; and we need to look into larger scale mechanised ways of removing it. Biological controls will need to be considered, as will better management of nutrients entering the pond. Finally, we need more regular volunteers. The gardeners are already overworked but there maybe times or occasions when we could get some help from them.”

Chris will write a report to form the basis of a discussion with City Parks on how we might work together to deal with the duckweed.

Ann pointed out that the gardening team are stretched to an extreme and so if we can do anything to help we should.

Lindsay and Chris will try to get the Cascade going next year for at least a few weekends.

4. Report from the Treasurer

Guy presented the Report and Accounts for the year ending December 2012, on behalf of Chris Cooke, who was unable to attend.

Summaries attached (Appendix 1 - Accounts for the 12 months to 31st December 2013; Appendix 2 - FOQP Events Summary Profit 2014).

Notes:

a) A major new expenditure this year was portable toilets. In previous years this was covered by the Council budgets and this year the FOQP had to pay. It was around £800 for all 3 events. (Ann pointed out that she obtained a good discount from the company, and that they didn't charge us for labour).

b) We have a healthy bank balance, but as a committee we need to look at ways of increasing the profit but keeping the events affordable.

5. Amendment to the Constitution

a). It was proposed that the maximum size of the committee should be changed from four officers and ten members to four officers and twelve members. This was unanimously accepted.

Johnny also reminded everyone that the Constitution provides for us to be able to co-opt people for specific tasks, and that we hope to be able to call on more potential volunteers for anything they would like to offer help with. Most of the events come down to a handful of people doing the work, and we need to try and get the community to step up.

b). It was proposed that we add the words in red to the existing phrase below: "Protection and improvement of the park environment for the people who use it (to include: facilities, infrastructure, **heritage landscape, historic buildings** and wildlife)."

c). It was proposed that we replace the existing objective "To further involve the community of park users in the long-term management of the park" with the broader objective: "**To encourage community participation in all aspects of the park.**"

It was agreed unanimously to accept both of these changes.

Peter Quine questioned whether the changes in wording were being made simply to facilitate a possible future Heritage Lottery bid.

Chris Lowe explained that as the instigator of the amendment he could assure Peter that this was not the case. He explained that there are four buildings in the Park which are listed by English Heritage and a number of others such as the Spa which are outside the park boundary but were very much part of a visitors positive experience of the park. In addition the Park itself was a designed landscape which had been designated by English Heritage as a 'Park of Special Historic Interest'. It was therefore appropriate that the constitution should include 'landscape heritage' and 'listed buildings' in the tally of park features for which the Friends of Queens Park declares an aim to 'protect and improve'..

6. Election of Committee Officers and Members

We are very sad to see Crispin Wynne-Roberts standing down, after his many years of support and passion, particularly for Bark. Johnny thanked him on behalf of everyone for his invaluable contribution over the last eight years, and he was presented with a photograph taken at Bark.

The current Chair (Johnny Webb), Vice Chair (Guy Smyth), Secretary (Lynda Ginart), and Treasurer (Chris Cooke) all stood for re-election and were unanimously elected, as were the current standing members: Randi Belgrove; Conrad Brunner; Ann Ewings; Susie Latta; Chris Lowe; Ed Allison-Wright; Nicky Bullock; Colin Chadwick; Delia Forester.

In accordance with the Constitution the cheque signatories are therefore Johnny Webb (Chair), Lynda Ginart (Secretary) and Chris Cooke (Treasurer).

7. Upcoming dates:

Sunday 26th from 11.00 a.m. Wild Garden clear up and sweeping a path in the dog area

Friday 12th December Carols in the Park 6.30. p.m. by the Tennis Club

8. Discussions/Q&A from the floor

Management Plan and Green Flag status

There was a discussion about the definition/objectives of the Management Plan. To summarise, the management plan will enable us to get an overview of where we are going. Ann compared it to a business plan for the park. There were some questions from the floor about details, but it was pointed out that it is still in the consultation stage and so no details have been decided.

It is necessary to have a management plan in order to apply for Green Flag status.

It was agreed that we should push for Green Flag status once we have the Management Plan.

There was a query from the floor about keeping a specific area of the park tidy. Colin has said that it has actually been cleared twice this year.

Volunteers and Finance

Chris pointed out that in Parks generally, because of Council's financial situations, there has been a shift whereby there are less people in parks who do the work, and so volunteers are needed to replace them. For example Pavilion Gardens has a tremendous amount of work done by volunteers.

Guy said that a good example of how to make good use of volunteer time is to follow the example of Nicky when she organised the Bake Off for Picnic. It needed a huge amount of organisation and she pulled out 15 volunteers to do an hour each and every one enjoyed it. Perhaps more of us could do more along those lines.

To summarise: It's about plugging into the networks that people already have, so a bigger committee means that more people are available to you.

Julia Tolley pointed out that 2 or 3 months ago there was an item on national radio saying that people living around parks could be asked to contribute maintenance. (This was a suggestion by a Policy Exchange, a think tank with close links to the government, which proposed that residents living near parks should be able to vote on whether to raise a "compulsory levy" to fund improvements).

Guy pointed out that legally, Councils actually have no mandatory obligation to look after parks. It was suggested that in this context, it is useful for Friends Groups to put pressure on the council, in a constructive way, as we have done with pushing them to engage with the community to see what is needed.

Johnny concluded by thanking everyone for attending, and emphasised that the Committee are very keen to encourage anyone present who does not wish to be on the Committee but would be willing to offer help during the year

Appendix 1

Friends of Queen's Park

Accounts for the 12 months to 31st December 2013

12mths to 31/12/2013

Profit from 2013 Events

Shakespeare in the Park	894
Picnic in the Park	2,668
Bark in the Park	968
Carols in the Park	190
	<hr/>
	4,720

Other Expenditure

Leadership training	35
Swifts amp etc	64
Dog walkers (donation)	125
Insurance	530
Web design + fees	137
AGM (gifts and exps)	120
Clean-up Day	8
Printing/Laminating	42
	<hr/>
	1,061

NET INCOME

3,659

Bank Balance (1st Jan 2013)	5,081
Net Income (as above)	3,659
Bank Balance (31st Dec 2013)	8,740

APPENDIX 2:
FQP EVENTS SUMMARY PROFIT 2014

	2014	2013 (comparative)
<i>BARK</i>	847	968
<i>PICNIC</i>	1,175	2,668
<i>SHAKESPEARE</i>	500	894
<i>TOTAL</i>	2,522	4,530