

FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK

Minutes of the third Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 19 October 2016 at St Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street, Oxford

Present:	Committee: Rob Waterston (Chair) Lesley Court (Secretary) Mark Redhead (Treasurer) Liz Rooke (Membership) Andrew Lack Peter Rooke	Oxford City Council: Chris Bell, Green Space Development Manager Caroline Chanides, Green Space Dev't Officer Alison Drummond, Events Team Michael Crofton-Briggs (Preservation Trust) Chris Langston & Nick Jones (Round Table) Luiza Gaysina (Brookes Community Warden) Leila Lake (Divinity Road Residents Ass'n)
	Members Rosemary Clayton Julie Evans Joan & John Foran Sarah Lane Sylvia Lymbery	Anthony May Tony Nanton Clare Newgass Penelope Newsome Amanda Wood

Homeshare Oxford's stand was staffed by Claire Shuttleworth.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed thanks to St Clement's Church for the use of the Family Centre for this meeting.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Susanna Bowles, Margaret Chambers, Debbie Dance (OPT), Richard & Gerdi Hayward, Peter McIntyre, Helen Moorhouse, Marie Power (Friends of Headington Hill Park)

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 October 2015 were approved as a correct record.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which were not on the current agenda.

4. **Chair's Report**

Rob Waterston welcomed everyone to the third AGM of Friends of South Park. He reported that the membership subscription had been held at £1 this year and encouraged everyone to join and thus to vote later in the meeting.

Sadly the founder and former Chair of FOSP, Susannah Bowles, was standing down from the committee, along with Treasurer Mark Redhead and Elizabeth Mills. They were thanked for their input to FOSP. Therefore new committee members were being sought, with a particular request for someone with IT skills so that Facebook and Twitter could be used.

The committee had met regularly and been involved in:

- A litterpick after the fireworks last year, for which the Round Table had donated £250 to FOSP. This year's litterpick would be on Sunday 6 November and it was hoped more volunteers could help: an email with full details would be sent to all FOSP members.
- Another litterpick as part of OxClean. In response to a query the meeting was assured that grey canisters found were not dangerous to those picking up litter.

- The application to convert the depot site at the top of the park to a distillery. This had now been approved and the committee would soon be meeting with TOAD to learn more. The plans were available to read on the Council's website.
- Discussing the toilet block at the top of the park, which had been Oxford's first legal graffiti wall but which was due for demolition in the near future, after 30 years of disuse.
- Liaison with the Parks team over tree management - the large oak had now been fenced off. This was because it was better for the tree to have mulch underneath, but also because of the risk of dead wood dropping onto people. The memorial bench had also been removed from under the tree for safety reasons.
- Responding to concerns about visibility and safety and arranging a working party to clear foliage from the railings at the Cheney Lane end of the footpath from Warneford Lane on Saturday 19 November.
- Liaison with the City Council Events Team to ensure minimum impact on the physical archaeology of the park and the lives of nearby residents of events – some of which were: Common People, Foodies Festival, Zippos Circus and the annual funfair.
- Working with the City Council to draft a Park Management Plan: Peter Rooke had been the main FOSP contributor to the PMP, the latest draft of which had that very day been received and which would be discussed at a committee meeting before December. Once the final draft was available all FOSP members would have a chance to make comments on it. It would be a discussion item at next year's AGM.
- Updating the FOSP website and endeavouring to publicise the group.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report is attached to the Minute Book. Mark Redhead reported that FOSP had again received £250 from Oxford Round Table re the fireworks litterpick, which was greatly appreciated, and £150 from the Co-operative Bank in compensation for mismanagement of the bank account application, as well as £36 in subscriptions. The only expenditure during the year had been the cost of hosting the website (£30) and £20 for sundries. There had again been no cost involved in running the AGM or committee meetings. There was a balance of £670.98 as at financial year end.

6. **Election of Officers**

Chair:

Rob Waterston – proposed by Peter Rooke, seconded by Andrew Lack, and elected unanimously

Secretary:

Lesley Court – proposed by Rob Waterston, seconded by Peter Rooke, and elected unanimously

Treasurer:

Andrew Lack - proposed by Rob Waterston, seconded by Lesley Court, and elected unanimously

Membership Secretary:

Liz Rooke - proposed by Rob Waterston, seconded by Lesley Court, and elected unanimously

7. **Election of Committee**

Two existing committee members were re-elected, namely Helen Moorhouse and Peter Rooke, and two new committee members were elected: Amanda Wood and Sarah Lane. In addition, Michael Crofton-Briggs would be invited to attend meetings as Oxford Preservation Trust's representative.

PRESENTATIONS

Alison Drummond, Oxford City Council's Events Officer, with just one other member in her department, manages about 300 different events and deals with thousands of enquiries each year.

There is a Memorandum of Understanding for South Park that there are four large events each year, plus two funfairs and two circuses. Two regular events are the Fireworks and the Foodies Festival, and in the past year the two new events were the Common People Festival and the Pretty Muddy event. She was currently looking at applications for 2017 and there would be a two-week consultation period for the public once these had been shortlisted.

In response to a comment about the state of the park following Pretty Muddy, she repeated her request for immediate feedback in case of problems at any events, as the Council held back organisers' deposits until they were sure all relevant remedial work following events had been carried out. In this case it seemed the litter had not been cleared for several days.

Re the Common People Festival, concern was expressed about the lack of a contact telephone number for residents of Granville Court re noise levels. There were then many comments about the fact that the railings which had been removed by the organisers had still not been replaced and Alison Drummond agreed to look into this, as organisers are obliged to restore the park to the condition in which they find it. Following another question, she would also ascertain the amount of profit made from events held in the park – but she did know that this first event had made a loss despite having been so popular.

There were also comments about the amount of mud and the length of time needed for the park to recover following the Fireworks event, as well as suggestions as to the location of matting. It was not considered that bark chip should be put around the edge of the park as this, along with the diagonal worn track across the park, was an unofficial route and this needed to be controlled by the City Council.

These and other problems, such as the ditch at the bottom of the park, were listed in the Park Management Plan and the committee would make comments reflecting the evening's discussion. Chris Bell said that a lot of the aspirational items in the Plan would depend on funding and encouraged FOSP to apply for funds – e.g. money was available for environmental projects via the Tesco carrier bag fund.

It had been disappointing to see mass party debris from Brookes students this term despite efforts by student community wardens to try to educate students to be good neighbours to South Park. Everyone was asked to report antisocial behaviour to the Council and to provide evidence showing whether the offender(s) came from Brookes, EF, etc.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

Sgt Neil Bouse, East Oxford Neighbourhood Team, Thames Valley Police

The East Oxford Neighbourhood Team consists of an Inspector (who covers a much larger area), Sgt Bouse, four PCs (one of whom was present at the meeting) and four Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The area covered by the team extends from the top of South Park to Aston's Eyot, and from The Plain to Howard Street. It is the most diverse neighbourhood population in the Thames Valley and is home to the largest student population in the country.

Priorities: These are set by Thames Valley as a result of Home Office instructions, but also via the East Oxford Neighbourhood Action Group – which usually meets every two months. A number of agencies and groups meet to talk about such problems as alcohol and antisocial behaviour (ASB), child sexual exploitation, and cycle safety.

Most of the problems to do with alcohol and ASB emanate from the summer foreign language schools, and the Foreign Language Schools Forum have met with partners from the city to discuss the management of the influx of students, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of reports of antisocial behaviour in the park. The East Oxford Team have also run many operations to make it more difficult for foreign students to be targeted by robbers.

The Team had been on duty on both nights of the Common People Festival and were in regular contact with the organisers, with briefings 2-3 times each day. The issue of traffic congestion on the first day was sorted out by the second day. The Council had checked sound levels regularly and the cut-off of the event had happened at the specified time. Very little crime had been reported.

Reporting incidents:

Contact the Police for crime and antisocial behaviour; personal safety & safeguarding; preservation of life and property. Members were informed that if they put their postcode into the Thames Valley Police website they will be directed to the local Neighbourhood Action Group.

Contact the Council re noise complaints; antisocial behaviour; environmental health; management of parks and litter.

In East Oxford there are 2/3 problem areas for drinking: South Park is mainly students and young persons, whereas Manzil Way, St Clement's, St Mary & St John Church and Alice House are mostly street drinkers.

PCSOs were mostly engaged in patrolling the area but when there was a serious problem they were called to other areas: "threat, risk and harm" takes priority over everything else.

In response to a comment about speeding in Morrell Avenue, Sgt Bouse suggested that residents consider having a Speedwatch operation in order to collect relevant data for transmission to the Council. Another comment concerned the speed of bicycles in Morrell Avenue. Sgt Bouse encouraged communities to be more creative about sourcing funds to help with these situations.

The Chair thanked Sgt Bouse for his full and interesting presentation.

8. **Any other business**

(a) Fireworks event – 5 November: Nick Jones of the Round Table stressed the importance of selling as many tickets as possible to the Fireworks event on 5 November in order to cover costs and then distribute funds to local charities such as children's centres. Amanda Wood mentioned the difficulty in picking up plastic cups which had disintegrated, and Chris Bell would feed this problem back to the organisers.

(b) Signage: Julie Evans again raised the problem of lack of signage and quoted one woman who had refused to stop feeding the birds until a sign was installed saying this was against the byelaws. Chris Bell asked to be informed further about this.

(c) Cheney students: Tony May reported that a small minority of Cheney students tended to take over the play area straight after school and their foul language/behaviour forced mothers and children to leave as they felt intimidated. Sgt Bouse promised to relay this information to the Schools Officer. It was also alleged that Cheney students had been responsible for causing the table tennis table to be ripped out, with no funds available for its replacement. The FOSP committee would look at the issue of funding a replacement table, signage, etc.

(d) Self-closers on park gates: Julie Evans was concerned that children and dogs were able to run out of the park. The committee would look at this again but in the meantime she was asked to look at other, less expensive options such as the kissing gates in University Parks. Meantime she informed the meeting that a petition was being handed to Andrew Smith MP, with a copy to the Council, asking for some way of closing the gates.

(e) Benches: Penelope Newsome asked for a bench to be put in halfway up the park. Clare Newgass suggested some of the wood being cut down could be used to make excellent benches.
