

FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK

Minutes of the fourth Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 18 October 2017 at St Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street, Oxford

Present:

Committee:

Rob Waterston (Chair)
Lesley Court (Secretary)
Andrew Lack (Treasurer)
Liz Rooke (Membership)
Sarah Lane
Helen Moorhouse
Peter Rooke
Amanda Wood

Oxford City Council:

Chris Bell, Green Space Development Manager
Caroline Chanides, Green Space Dev't Officer
Sam Prior, Tree Surveyor

Supporters:

Michael Crofton-Briggs (Oxford Preservation Trust)
Debbie Dance (Oxford Preservation Trust)
Chris Langston (Oxford Round Table)
Jon Kay (Oxford Round Table)
Luiza Gaysina (Brookes Community Warden)

Members

Margaret Brazier
Margaret Brown
Rosemary Clayton
Christine Colbeck
David Colbeck
Patrick Denby
Anthony Eccles
Timothy Eden
Julie Evans
Hilary Frisby
Sarah Gardner
Richard Hayward
Gerdi Hayward
Lavinia John
Sandra Kent
Tom Knollys
Sylvia Lymbery
Lucy Martin
Sarah Rose

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Susanna Bowles, Margaret Chambers, Anne Copley, Catriona Davidson, Jim Ferguson, Anne Hall, Cllr Tom Hayes, Sarah Lasenby, Elizabeth Mills.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 October 2016 were approved as a correct record.

3. **Matters Arising**

The Chair referred to the problem of antisocial behaviour in the park and asked members to report any such incidents to the Police at the time they happened.

Patrick Denby raised the issue of railings not having been replaced following events, particularly at the Headington Hill entrance, where there were logs. The Council and OPT representatives said they were working to find a solution that would be practical and aesthetically pleasing. (This item was further discussed under AOB, towards the end of the meeting.)

4. **Chair's Report**

Rob Waterston welcomed everyone to the fourth AGM of Friends of South Park.

As well as Caroline Chanides and Chris Bell of the Parks Department he welcomed Sam Prior, Tree Surveyor, who would be available to answer questions later in the meeting. Alison Drummond was unable to attend but had left a report on events, copies of which were available for all.

He reported that the membership subscription had again been held at £1 this year and encouraged everyone to join and thus be able to vote later in the meeting.

There had been varied reactions to events during the year: everyone would have been pleased at the result of the clearance of railings near the Cheney Lane top-end gate by a few Friends. The Common People event had not caused too many problems. However, some Members had been exercised about the distillery – TOAD - which was now up and running, though the licensing application had yet to be submitted. It was hoped TOAD would be able to help in the demolition of the toilet block once their workers were on site.

During the year FOSP had taken emergency action to water some of the dozen saplings which had been planted by the Council but not watered for unavoidable reasons: Sam Prior took the opportunity to thank those members of the Committee who had taken on this task.

The committee had met regularly and been involved in:

- Park Management Plan: Peter Rooke had devoted countless hours alongside Council officers in the preparation of this document. It would now go to the Portfolio Holder for final approval. It would then be displayed in public places, as well as on the Council and FOSP websites. The Committee would discuss it and this would be an agenda item at next year's AGM.

Peter Rooke explained different sections of the PMP: Section 5 is the Action Plan, with 4-5 pages of descriptions of action needed and a date by which this should be done. There is a funding issue about some of the items. There is an annual review process with the Council and OPT, and Mrs Dance thought it sensible for a member of FOSP to be included in these annual reviews. The PMP is a working document.

David Colbeck said that for a few years residents of London Place had been trying to make the approach into Oxford more attractive. They proposed planting bulbs around the memorial and beyond, as well as small trees and shrubs, but needed to take into account the view cones into South Park and awaited the agreement of the Council and consultation with OPT. FOSP might be asked to help with this planting.

- A litterpick after the fireworks last year, for which the Round Table had donated £250 to FOSP. John Kay, current Chair of Oxford Round Table, said that this year's litterpick would be on Sunday 5 November and it was hoped FOSP volunteers could help: an email with full details would be sent to all FOSP members. Mr Kay indicated that there were funds available to help local causes if organisations wished to apply.
- Litterpick as part of OxClean. Unfortunately this had to be cancelled in view of inclement weather. The next OxClean weekend is 4/5 March 2018.
- Events.
Sylvia Lymbery reported that the fireworks at the Cowley Road Carnival were very close to Granville Court and debris from that event was still being found. Chris Bell undertook to report this.

Peter Rooke stressed to the meeting the importance of reporting damage to Alison Drummond within two weeks of an event so that some of the money from the deposit bond could be used to rectify the situation. They could do this by email: events@oxford.gov.uk.

- TOAD. The distillery was now functioning and tours were available. The next phase would be the cafe/restaurant and toilets, which would be starting in 2018. The Chair encouraged people to visit the site and talk to the staff there, who were very keen to be part of the local community. The cafe would be dog-friendly.

Debbie Dance said that OPT had been on the receiving end of some difficult calls and items in the press. However, the restaurant would not extend into the park and the barn had been preserved. The covenant on the park had been relaxed only with reference to the

depot; the new building would be within the site.

- Updating of the FOSP website: This had continued, and various social media outlets had been used to promote FOSP. Further ideas for publicising the group would be welcomed.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

Andrew Lack had not been able to obtain a statement from the bank but knew from his records that there was about £720 in the account. The running costs of FOSP were very low, and small items had been purchased during the year to help with the extra watering of the trees. He would continue in his attempts to obtain statements.

6. **Election of Officers**

Chair:

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

Membership Secretary:

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

7. **Election of Committee**

Four existing committee members were re-elected: namely Sarah Lane, Helen Moorhouse, Peter Rooke and Mandy Wood, One new committee member was elected: Tim Eden. In addition, Michael Crofton-Briggs attends meetings as Oxford Preservation Trust's representative.

8. **Any other business**

(a) Safety: Sarah Gardner raised the issue of self-closing gates, having on occasion witnessed animals running out into the road and wanting to prevent accidents involving both children and dogs. She had brought along correspondence with the former East Oxford MP Andrew Smith, as well as members of the Council and others, and handed this to the Chair for further action. Maggie Brown said that in one area the gates are there but just need to be re-hung. Another member said that South Park is unusual in that it is surrounded by three very fast roads, which is why it is so dangerous. The suggestion was made that an initial application be made to the Round Table for the cost of surveying the situation, including the possible closure of the Headington Hill gate and re-opening of the Marston Road gate.

Peter Rooke said a survey of the gates and railings was one of the action plans in the Park Management Plan and therefore an application could be made to the Round Table in the near future. This was seconded by Caroline Chanides.

Following a refreshment break Sam Prior, Oxford City Council's Tree Surveyor, answered questions.

Sarah Rose asked about the large oak in the middle of the park and whether the fact that the chippings had been compacted had caused the tree to die. Sam Prior explained that the mulch had been placed around the tree to provide more nutrients and the fencing had been erected to restrict access and allow the tree to decline in a dignified manner, as well as for health and safety reasons. He said there was no intention to remove the tree: a three-year survey had been carried out and resultant works performed, and there were no major concerns about the stability of the tree.

Andrew Lack suggested the cause of the tree's condition was honey fungus, in which case the molecular structure of the tree would be changed. However, the City Council had found no evidence of this and were monitoring the situation.

Asked by Rob Waterston about the horse chestnuts at the top of the park, Sam Prior said that leaf minor and leaf blotch were affecting them somewhat, but that drought or flooding would cause more harm.

Michael Crofton-Briggs asked about the principle of successional planting. Sam Prior replied that the trees in South Park were all of a similar age and therefore the Council were trying to plant new ones to maintain the tree stock. Where there were clumps of trees these could be thinned out but the Council would need to discuss with Oxford Preservation Trust any clumps that affected the view cone. The Council were trying to continue a form of woodland management but would not remove healthy trees, only weaker specimens.

Regarding the removal ivy on trees, Sam Prior said it depended on the species of tree. The Council usually removed ivy from the base of a tree prior to inspection but it was sensible to leave it on trees in a woodland as it was a good ecological resource.