

FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK

Minutes of the ninth Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 5 October 2022 St Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street, Oxford

Present

Committee: Rob Waterston (Chair); Lesley Court (Secretary); Peter Rooke; Amanda Wood

Members: Anne Copley, Rose Clayton, Anna Davidson, Paul Goldberg, Gerdi and Richard Hayward, Roger Jenking, Rosie Pocock, David Runciman

Oxford City Council: Chris Bell, Green Space Development Manager; Cllr Jemima Hunt

TOAD: Dave Smith

Oxford Preservation Trust: Charlie Jackson, Green Spaces Officer

Oxford Round Table: Joseph Garbett, Chris Langston, Stuart Langston, Richard Shannon

The Chair welcomed everyone to FoSP's 9th AGM. As agreed at the previous meeting, the committee are considering different venues for the meetings and he asked for views: one person preferred the AGM to be held at Cheney School and this will be discussed at the next committee meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies have been received from: Cllr Chewe Munkonge (Cabinet Member for Leisure & Parks), Andrew Lack (Treasurer), Liz Rooke (Membership Secretary), Jamie Gordon (OCC Events Officer), Laura Harlock (OCC Tree Officer), Sgt Beth Snowdon and nine members.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 November 2021 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chair's Report

The full report is attached to the Minute Book. In addition, the Chair has recently seen and heard ring-necked parakeets in the park. Advice from the city council was to report any that were too near houses as they could be a nuisance.

Regarding signage, the city council has some funding available, although not enough to cover the full cost. The type of signage has not been agreed between OCC and OPT. OPT have not responded to FoSP's proposals; the city council have not yet seen them. If the design is approved wording for the new signs will be needed.

The proposal for 'grasscrete' at the Morrell Avenue entrance to the park has not been approved by the Council so another solution needs to be found to deal with the mud there.

The grass has recovered from the very dry summer and the trees have withstood the drought. It was unfortunate that members of the Parks Department Tree Team were not present at this AGM to give further details.

The Chair referred to 'The Circle of Life' initiative by the Parks Dept. This has resulted in small information discs being attached to a number of fallen trees around the park. Chris Bell said there has been succession planting of oaks but there will be no more tree planting in the viewing cone as it is now at capacity.

The table tennis table is still in use and undamaged, although slightly graffitied.

On the Cheney Lane side of the park is the basketball pole, hoop and net. Cllr Hunt reported that Cllr Munkonge is applying for funding for its replacement; it was suggested that Cheney School be

approached for help towards this. Chris Bell queried whether the basketball hoop was in the right place in the park.

Littering continues to be a major problem, as well as BBQs, fires and other anti-social behaviour. New bins have been installed but one participant said it was difficult to open these. Chris Bell explained that the bins are designed to prevent wild animals getting food out. Rosie Peacock said litter in the park made it dangerous for dog walking in the mornings until the Parks Dept had done their first clean of the day. Chris Bell said that parks teams are out by 7am each day and litter is collected three times every day.

On the perennial issue of railings, one section has fallen down and there are gaps on the Warneford Lane side. Anne Copley asked if OCC could provide some metal fencing with ties to prevent accidents caused by children or dogs running onto the road. She pointed out that the Round Table were able to block gaps at the time of the annual Fireworks Display but needed to remove their fencing the following morning. Chris Bell explained that there had been a fatal accident in Headington Hill Park in the summer because of spiked railings. Charlie Jackson said OPT would welcome a proposal regarding the future of the railings. It was pointed out that OCC have already sent OPT a proposal. She asked Chris Bell to resubmit.

Cllr Hunt thought there had been over-mowing in the park before the drought and asked if there could be larger areas of meadow. However, OCC reported that this would change the nature of this historic parkland. To improve biodiversity the council are considering introducing bat boxes.

5. Treasurer's Report

In Andrew Lack's absence the Chair thanked him for preparing his report, in which it was stated that the current balance in the account was £1483.69. Income included subscriptions plus a donation of £250 from the Round Table for help clearing the park after the fireworks in November 2021. Outgoings included £61.27 for renewal of the FoSP internet domain name for two years, hire of the hall for the AGM, and minor items of stationery and photocopying.

6. Election of Officers

With the unanimous agreement of the meeting all four officers were re-elected as follows:

Chair: Rob Waterston
Secretary: Lesley Court

Treasurer: Andrew Lack
Membership Secretary: Liz Rooke

7. Election of Committee

Peter Rooke and Mandy Wood were also elected to the committee nem con. Charlie Jackson was co-opted onto the committee as a representative of OPT.

The Chair invited anyone interested in joining the committee to contact FoSP.

8. Any Other Business

There was no further business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

This will be notified in mid-2023.

Following the AGM, there were the following presentations:

Oxford Round Table

Joseph Garbutt, the Chair, reported that the 2021 Fireworks Display had the largest attendance ever (possibly because of the pent-up frustration following the pandemic) and had raised £70k for local charities.

This year the fireworks will start at 7.15pm promptly unless there is adverse weather. It was suggested that the Round Table's letter to local residents should remind them that they must not access the event via back gates from houses on Morrell Avenue as it is dangerous.

More, and larger litter bins will be provided at this year's event. Although the Round Table will have help clearing up after the fireworks, they would welcome help by FoSP members the following morning.

Mandy Wood asked if the Round Table had approached the county council about parking in view of the recent loss of all parking places in Marston Road and Morrell Avenue. The Round Table are publicising alternatives such as Park and Ride and an increased number of buses to the area, as well as the use of electric scooters. For the first time, designated e-scooter parking will be available at the event.

In answer to a question about the use of silent fireworks to make life easier re dogs the Round Table said that dog owners living near the park could contact the Round Table for help.

The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD)

Dave Smith, CEO, reported that an agreement for £10m funding to develop the site should be in place by the end of October, meaning that TOAD can: increase capacity and efficiency; restore the Grade II threshing barn as both a community asset and tour centre, with rest rooms; and install space for use as a café by day and for social events at night. They hope to remove the fence between their premises and South Park and landscape the area. TOAD plan to increase their production capacity to expand the business and will be focussing on whisky production rather than gin. It would probably be 18 months to two years before completion of the project. There will be a further £30m available over six years if their milestone targets are met.

Park Management Plan

Chris Bell reported that the Action Plan will be updated during 2023. The main priorities will be the play area, new bins and benches around the park. There is still the difficulty of the muddy Morrell Avenue entrance to be resolved.

Events in the Park

Roger Jenking, concerned about damage to the ridge and furrow, enquired about the number of events held in the park and was informed by OCC that under the memorandum between OCC and OPT four large events are allowed each year, one of which is the Fireworks Display plus three others.

Expressions of interest for events in 2023 will be discussed by the council in the near future.

Parks Satisfaction Survey

Chris Bell reported that there had been 40 replies to this, over 90 per cent of which said they did not travel to the park by car. Top requests are: to fix the drainage at the bottom; provide more bins; increase biodiversity; install toilets; improve signage. It was not possible to restore the derelict toilet block. The Parks Department have received a quote of over £20k to demolish it. Demolition, will be difficult and expensive due to the proximity of tree roots and asbestos in the building. Toilets in TOAD's rest rooms are available to park users.

FoSP Working Party

This has been arranged for the afternoon of Sunday 20 November. Chris Bell reminded the committee that they should only cut down ivy where it improved sightlines but otherwise removing it will destroy biodiversity.