

FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK

Minutes of the tenth Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 12 October 2023 St Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street, Oxford

Present

Committee: Rob Waterston (Chair); Lesley Court; Andrew Lack; Liz Rooke; Peter Rooke

Members: Sabita Banerji, Rose Clayton, John Coleman, Artem Diuba, Roger Jenking, Helen Moorhouse, Claire Newgass, Rosie Pocock, David Runciman, George Wormald

Oxford City Council (OCC): Chris Bell and Jessica Goodenough (Green Space Development); Jamie Gordon (Events Officer)

Representing TOAD: Dan Wadsworth (Architect)

Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT): Stephen Dawson, Operations Director

Oxford Round Table: Joseph Garbett, Neil Holdstock, Richard Shannon

Oxford Brookes University: Grace Duffy, Hannah Wiffen (Community Wardens)

The Chair welcomed everyone to FoSP's 10th AGM.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from 11 members plus Cllr Jemima Hunt.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 October 2022 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. Points covered included:

- The AGM venue would continue to be St Clement's Centre for the foreseeable future.
- The City Council's 5-year Park Management Plan for South Park would not be updated until Chris Bell had a plan for the perimeter fencing.
- A priority for the committee in the coming year would be to agree appropriate wording for permanent signage and to work with the Council to ensure signage is erected.
- Perimeter railings and their possible replacement by fencing remained an issue. Discussion revealed that most of the railings date from the mid-20th century and their replacement cost would be more than £1m. OCC considered a review of the entrances was as important. There was also discussion regarding fitting automatic closing gates to protect dogs. There would be a separate agenda item at the 2024 AGM on entrances to the park.
- It was noted that there was other protective fencing within the park around dead trees for the safety of park users. In addition, there was now fencing around the disused toilet block. This was because asbestos had been found in the roof of the building.
- The basketball court had been revamped during the year and the zip-wire base resurfaced.
- The Chair asked if there was another way in which items for the bonfire could be transported across the park to avoid causing as much damage as in the previous year. The Round Table replied that they had arranged to use 200 removable mats this year, concentrating on one particular area.

Remedial work following the Fireworks Display would be undertaken by Oxford Direct Services (ODS) when the ground was dry enough. OCC's Events Officer pointed out that the Round Table bore the cost of such repairs. In 2022 the event income was around £80k. Repair costs are funded by income from the event, the rest going to charity.

In response to a query about bonfires it was noted that the pollution from one bonfire equals less than one day's worth of car emissions.

The suggestion was made that post-event correspondence be put on Facebook to keep members updated. The Round Table are happy to respond to emails.

Dog walkers expressed concern about fireworks; the Round Table had investigated using drones instead, but the cost would be prohibitive. The Council's view was that it is much safer to have one large, organised event rather than multiple smaller ones.

Dates to note are: the fireworks display on 4 November; a FoSP working party on 26 November; the OxClean event in spring 2024.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The balance in the account was £1,700. Income during the year had been from subscriptions (£36) and a donation from the Round Table (£250). Outgoings had been mainly stationery and the hire of the hall for the AGM, totalling £65.

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 re-elected to the committee. Stephen Dawson was co-opted as the OPT representative.

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

8. **Any Other Business**

Roger Jenking asked whether the annual meeting between OCC and the Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) had taken place. Jamie Gordon, City Council Events Officer, replied that it would happen in November. He added that there had been fewer applications and as a result OCC had reduced their fees for events in the coming year. Applications would be reviewed in November.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

To be notified in mid-2024.

Following the AGM, there were the following presentations:

Oxford Round Table

Joseph Garbett outlined the history and purpose of the Round Table, which is for men aged up to 45. Many are helped with mental health issues – he said that around 100 suicides have been prevented from among their members nationally.

In 2022, 27,500 people attended the South Park Fireworks Display, which generated £80k for charities. This year, the Round Table had arranged more bins and a wider choice of catering; Oxford Bus Company would be running more buses for the event.

The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD)

Dan Wadsworth, of Justin Cook Architects, explained recent developments: Diageo had invested a large sum and his company would be working with TOAD and Diageo to develop the site. In future all large-scale distilling would be done off-site, with plans for the Depot site to offer a visitor centre, shop and community facility. There would be a seating area and some display space. During opening hours there would be access to toilet facilities.

A copy of the planning application would be sent to FoSP, who would circulate it to members: it was to be submitted by Christmas 2023 (following six years of work).

Other matters

Chris Bell of OCC announced that there would be succession planting of trees: these would be ordered in summer 2024 and planted the following winter.

One member asked about clearing dangerous (e.g. drug-related) items from wooded areas and was assured that patrol officers inspected these areas regularly.

Instances of antisocial behaviour appeared to have reduced. Members were reminded of the way to report such behaviour online.

Oxford Brookes Community Wardens

Wardens had visited rented student houses and regularly dealt with noise complaints. It was agreed the letters from Oxford Brookes regarding noise would be forwarded to FoSP members.

Some of the Brookes team would be available to help with the clear up on 5 November following the firework event.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.