

MINUTES FOR 2017 AGM of Friends of Headington Hill Park

25 April 2017

Apologies received from Penelope Newsome, Elaine Nicol, Katie Pandec, Eilined Pearce, Cllr Farida Anwar

List of attendees:

1. Welcome and Introductions – David Colbeck as acting Chairman thanked Brookes University for allowing the Friends to use their facilities.
2. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 10 May 2016 were approved.
3. Election of officers following the resignation of Marie Power.
4. The following names were put forward:
 - Alastair Buchanan, Chairman
 - Alison Boulton, Deputy Chair
 - Ian Gourlay Special Adviser
 - Barbara Foran, Secretary
 - David Colbeck, Treasurer, (re-election)
 - Sylvia Lymbery, Membership Secretary

The officers introduced themselves and were approved unanimously.

5. Financial report and accounts for 2016/17 were approved. Income of £129.00 taken in which added to previous year now totals £587.50
6. Not very much undertaken during the last year.
7. The general objectives of the FoHH Park were summarised by the newly appointed Chairman. Two possible dates for tree and other clearance **Saturday 1 July** and **Sunday 24 September** were announced. Participants need to be insured (*Council forms for this which must be signed by participants given to Ian Gourlay*). Tools should be in good working order. Clearance includes moving logs and clearing branches, cutting back some of the ivy. In consultation with the Council work might need to be done on the drainage.

The chair proposed planting 6 new trees each year in a rolling programme over 10 years totalling 60 trees with a similar number removed. This will keep the park looking robust. Aim for deciduous trees for Spring and Autumn colour. Recommends finding people to finance purchase and planting of trees.

The long-standing aim to erect an information board showing the layout of interesting trees was flagged by the chair. As was making available a printed map of a tree walk and to also publish this electronically.

The Chairman suggested approaching the Islamic Centre and Brookes University to fundraise for the park. It was stressed that the priority for the Friends is cooperation with the Council's gardening team.

The FoHH Park should monitor and advise on public events. There used to be theatre in the park (now moved to the castle). However, there is no great need to press for activities in the park as there's a lot going on in Oxford

8. Statement by Oxford city council on their objectives for the park : The council representative, Caroline Chanides, welcomed the resurrection of the group. Oxford has 16 Friends groups across the city. She stressed the value these groups provide in terms of fundraising, work groups etc. As far as the council is concerned, they are maintaining the status quo of the park through grass cutting to avoid bulbs etc, trees are surveyed on a 3-year cycle. Trees are only removed if diseased or dead. Sam Pryor is the tree surgeon and Ben Downing is the supervisor of the tree team for the Council. She welcomed the Friends proposed objectives. On the working parties, the supervisor will look at the work that needs to be done beforehand. People will be insured via signing the volunteer agreement for working on council land. The tree team would need to approve any removal of trees. Discussed marking up trees for ID. This can be done electronically rather than using physical signs. The council does not label trees in other parks.

David Colbeck (Treasurer) pointed out that in comparison to other Oxford parks, this park has more interesting trees and it will be a means of schools and other visitors informing themselves on the history of the park and trees planted.

Caroline Chanides welcomed the idea of a notice board. Ian Gourlay suggested approaching the Islamic Centre and Brookes for funding this. The chairman has links to the Islamic Center and will approach them and Trevor Mostyn offered to support the Chairman on this.

Ian Gourlay summed up the reasons for disappointment over the council's failure to be more closely engaged with the group and its failure to prioritise peoples' vision for the park rather than the council's vision. He noted a new fence the reason for which has not been explained. Nor had the Friends been informed about the new trees planted which was long-standing goal of the group in the past.

The major objective of the working parties would be removing ivy and suckers but there's also mistakes being made in trees being planted too closely together, compromising specimen trees. This needs to be addressed.

On tree signage he recommended numbering the trees for electronic or printed identification and emphasised that its more important to give the historical context to past planting and the choice of specific trees.

Alastair Buchanan (Chairman) and David Colbeck (Treasurer) also asked the council for more input as the committee has expertise to contribute. Alison Boulton (Deputy Chair) emphasised the need for more of a two-way communications process with the council.

The council representative asked the Friends whether they had observed the gym equipment in the park being used? One member had seen the hurdles being used.

The chairman suggested joint meetings with the Council. This was agreed by Caroline Chanides, particularly prior to work parties.

Cllr Nigel Chapman introduced himself. He was elected last year. This was his first chance to attend a meeting of this kind. He assured the Friends that he had taken extensive notes of the issues discussed and promised to engage personally on the needs and issues raised which the council should, in theory, be able to assist with.

9. Alastair Buchanan (Chair) suggested appointing the sub-committee via the next FoHH Park committee meeting independently of the AGM. David Colman (Treasurer) summarised the objective of the sub-committee: to landscape the area from the South Park gate to Morell Avenue. It would be run as a separate function financially and otherwise from the FoHH Park organisation. The council representative, Caroline Chanides, suggested that forming a subcommittee would save time. The motion was proposed by Chris Colbeck, seconded by John Foran and was passed by the meeting with 3 abstentions.

10. Other current issues –

A discussion ensued on long-standing abuse of the car park. The car park belongs to the City Council and the policy is the car park is for park users only. There is no public information on this and a notice board to this end should be erected. The treasurer pointed out that the sign “cars give way to pedestrians” should also inform that access is to the dairy only. The Bury Knoll Friends group are trying to resolve a similar problem by making it the car park disabled parking only. Charging for parking was discussed and rejected.

The non-surfaced footpaths at the bottom end of the park, at Pullens lane and opposite the Islamic Centre become a quagmire if it rains. They urgently need releveling and surfacing. There could be a duty of care should someone slip and injure themselves resulting in suing the council.

11. AOB

Barbara J. Foran – Secretary.