

Minutes of the Friends of Turnham Green (FoTG) Annual General Meeting

17 October 2023

Christ Church, Turnham Green from 7.30 to 9 pm

Minutes to be read in conjunction with the slides prepared for the meeting which are linked here.

Present from the Committee

Kathleen Mitra (Deputy Chair/Interim Treasurer) (KM)
Ed Stanley (Secretary) (ES)
Jan Hewlett. (JH)
David Halliday. (DH)
Nick Fletcher. (NF)

Apologies from Rebecca Frayn who was unable to attend

Also in attendance Nicola Pusterla (NP) of Tom Stuart Smith and Associates (TSS)

18 Members were present including the 5 Committee members, plus Cllr Biddolph and Gill. This rendered the meeting technically inquorate on the basis of a membership list of 125 (however, there were no substantive motions tabled on the agenda).

Chairs Welcome and Address

KM welcomed attendees and introduced the Committee members. She gave a review of the past year referencing bulb planting, wild flower meadow, the Tommy Hollis Memorial Garden, the Water Fountain, the Green Flag award, a steady increase in membership and the sending out of bulletins. She thanked all those involved.

Last Year's Minutes

The minutes of the last AGM in 2022 were approved. These had been sent to members in a link attached to an email sent on 16 October.

Secretary

ES offered his resignation as Secretary and sought re-election for another 3 year term. This was proposed by JH and seconded by KM and passed with all present in favour.

ES gave the Secretary's address; principally noting that we have a spare Committee position and have identified IT and social media skills as particularly desirable.

Treasurer's Report

KM who is acting Treasurer gave the Treasurer's report.

Two questions/issues were raised from the floor. First, whether "commercial" users of the Green paid anything; FoTG certainly receive nothing, however it is believed LBH charge some rentals. Cllr Biddolph said she would endeavour to find out from LBH if Heathfield School paid any charge for using the Green as their sports field. Further, do we get a contribution from builders such as Empire House?; no, the Council charges a CIL levy. Cllr Biddolph outlined the process.

Second, Jill Spencer (JS) noted that the Irwins funfair lorries were getting ever closer to new trees planted on the East side; was LBH aware of this? Iain Sanderson (IS) who is a signatory to the LGO settlement said he is in constant communication with Sonia Ferdusi of LBH Events team to ensure strict compliance with its terms.

Flower Meadows and Bulb Planting

KM then introduced the Wild Flower Meadow and Bulb planting section; she handed to NP and JH who reviewed the plans going forward for this year. These focused on the wild flower meadow main area, the Heathfield/Fromow Corner triangle and the strip behind the rockery and the bulb planting project around the periphery (i.e. Phases 1 and 2 of the plans put in 2022). See slides

Numerous members commented on how well the wild flower meadow looked this year and commended those involved with it.

Members were asked if they were agreeable to the plans thus far - all in favour.

Members were asked if they were content with the involvement of TSS - all in favour.

Members were specifically asked by JH to approve scarifying of the meadows area to enable the seeding of more yellow rattle to prevent/reduce grass growth - all in favour.

One Member noted that a large tree by the Memorial garden on Heathfield Terrace had been stripped down last week; it was agreed the Committee would endeavour to find out why.

Cllr Biddolph believes that LBH has a tree website which identifies all Park trees in the borough or similar; this might be worthwhile to check.

Benches

ES addressed the meeting; LBH had some extra funding left over from the water pipe project and intended to place some 5 or so new benches on the Green. These were on existing concrete bases. A map was shown (slide 25). There were also suggestions of additional/alternative sites which would involve the laying of a new base; these were at the Fromow Corner triangle and along the diagonal path (slide 26).

Members were broadly in favour of benches on existing sites where they replaced previous. DH spoke to the suggestion that there be benches along the diagonal path. A number of Members objected principally on grounds that the benches might promote anti-social behaviour. The proposal went to a vote; 2 were in favour and 8 against, with 8 abstentions.

Signs

ES updated Members on the new signs that LBH proposed to roll out borough-wide. These were work in progress but might be in situ by the end of the year.

Rockery

JH then updated Members on the rockery and the work done by the volunteer team this year.

Lighting, safety at night, anti-social behaviour

ES introduced this issue at the request of some Members. He accepted this was a huge topic and the Police Ward panel meeting the previous night had not instilled much confidence in the Police's ability to deal quickly with anything other than serious incidents. The arguments for and against lighting of the diagonal path are self explanatory. ES had unearthed some photos from the late Victorian days showing gas lights on the path, but obviously there is no evidence of how effective these were.

A number of Members felt strongly that they did not feel safe walking along the diagonal path at night. One member expressed annoyance that the issue had been put so late in the agenda as it was more important than the plants. She asked why the meeting would not continue (the answer being the cost of hiring the hall). JS said she wanted a meeting with the Council.

A vote was taken whether Members present would like lighting along the diagonal path; 9 were for: 4 against, with 5 abstentions.

It was agreed we would write to the Council to enquire about lighting.

An issue was raised about the beech hedge along the path next to the Fromow Corner triangle; this had been cut back recently but is still too high, looks unsightly and is potentially a hiding spot for anti-social behaviour. It was agreed we write to the Council asking if it can be either cut back to the level of the fence or removed entirely.

Bicycle/Ebikes on the Green

ES introduced the perennial issue of bicycles on the Green at the request of several members. The problem remains the same; cycling is not prohibited under LBH's bye-laws and this isn't going to change anytime soon. The diagonal path is a well established cut-through. However, the increased use of electric bikes makes the problems more acute. JS wants signs put up to tell cyclists to behave responsibly; she circulated pictures of circular signs she has seen in the Lake District as reminders and wonders if we can adopt a similar approach here.

There was no time for AOB. The meeting ended at 9 pm. KM thanked all for attending.

Ed Stanley
Secretary Friends of Turnham Green