

FOVG AGM MINUTES

ST Peter's Church, Harrogate

6th March 2024:1830 | *Meeting called to order by* Peter Holmes

In Attendance

Trustees: Peter Holmes, Anne Grange and Andrew Jordan. PH chaired.

Guests: Kate Dawson, Community assets and engagement Manager. Jonathan Clubb, Head, parks & grounds. Paul Cook, Curator of RHS Harlow Carr Gardens.

22 members of FOVG.

Plus named guests: Total 25

Apologies: Liz Chidlow, Steve Chidlow, Martin Fish, Jane&Peter Blayney, Chrissie Holmes, Eleanor McClea, Bill Willard, Pam Grant, Andy Bolton, Stuart Holland, Carolyn Green, Anne Smith and Ian Barrass.

Approval of minutes and reports

The minutes from the 2023 AGM were circulated via email to members. No issues or comments were raised and were therefore accepted as accurate. The Finance and Membership report by AG was circulated via email. No issues were noted. The Trustee Report by AJ was circulated via email. No issues were noted. Volunteer Gardeners Report by Liz Chidlow was circulated via email. No issues noted.

Resignations and Re-elections.

All Trustees resigned and put forward their intention to be re-elected. PH put this to a verbal vote. Appointments were unanimously accepted. Martin Fish resigned as President of FOVG. Paul Cook was proposed as the new incumbent. PH put this to a verbal vote. Appointment was unanimously accepted.

Report from Kate Dawson & Jonathan Clubb.

Kate and Jonathan covered a wide variety of subjects. There was an emphasis on the further commercialization of parks and gardens. The regular markets were seen as a success and further events including pop up parties, theatre shows, (wind in the willows – July), Beam light show, and Junior park runs were planned.

The following subjects were covered :-

Herbaceous borders – Removed due to being considered unsightly.

Dahlia Beds – Extended and rear area cleared.

New plants – 300 new plants to be planted this summer.

Lake Beds – Changed to new style and asked to wait until flowers bloom to judge how they appear. Two new urns installed and planted.

Golden Metasequoia – Replaced.

Colonnade – April Clematis planting.

Questions from members

The following questions/issues were raised by members:-

Well Beds: General consensus was the teardrop shape was too small and would encourage ball games/gatherings. Reply: the size of the beds were considered appropriate to also encourage picnicking and sitting and that these beds were for all visitors to the VG, not just for plant/flower enthusiasts. Re stated that members should wait for summer before final judgment.

General consensus was still that the beds were too small or badly proportioned for the area.

General consensus was that beds were being removed and not replaced. Reply: some beds removed but highlighted the new rose arch to be installed. A point was raised that the rose arch was relatively small. Reply was that the roses would grow out and expand over time.

General consensus was that economies of cuts were affecting quality of VG. Reply: No cuts planned including gardeners'. Any cuts were being targeted at managers and supervisors. Efficiencies were to be found by merging 8 teams into 1.

1940's Day:

Friends of Valley Gardens arranged the 1940s Day successfully for many years. Still, it became obvious that the event was becoming too large with too much red tape and expenses for our small committee to continue, so the event was transferred to the larger organisation, Harrogate International Festivals which held it for one further year.

Enforcement of Dog Lead Policy: General consensus was that it should be enforced more rigorously. Reply: This was considered very challenging. The main challenge being the lack of enforcement officers for on the spot fine collection. Responsible ownership was encouraged but not easily enforced.

Statement from member "Dog Lead Policy, either have one and enforce it or get rid of it"

Bike riders: Reply, Same issues with enforcement. More signage suggested.

Pitch and Putt: Reply, P & P will go and be replaced with a junior jump track. Consultation was complete, including the most appropriate surface. AJ stated compacted surface not appropriate. Liaison with similar groups was ongoing regarding surface material and no decision has been taken yet. A final report is imminent.

Nursery Future: Reply, A business case was pending with a preference to continue the policy of local growing but no decision on the location. All opinions at present were speculation.

OMWPR maintenance: Points raised regarding guttering, pointing and painting. Kate to follow up with answers.

Damaged Lamp post's Reply, Jonathan is aware and that this was an issue for the Highways dpt. No updates at this time.

Memorial Seats: Reply, A difficult and sensitive subject. Policy on seats was being reviewed and looking at options. Possible solution would be new terms and conditions for new seats that would not allow for seats becoming shrine's.

Roofing for Colonnade: Reply, there is no plans for roofing the colonnade. Reasons given were cost and it being Grade II listed.

Markets/events monies raised: Reply, money raised from VG commercial events were not ring fenced for VG. Money goes into "a pot".

Donation Posts: Reply, Delayed due to council changes. Also issues with technology and security. Jonathan has no control over the decision.

Waste Bins: Reply, Paused due to council restructure.

Handkerchief tree status: Reply, Its still alive, was surveyed and that it will stay.

Bandstand Overhang from trees: Reply, looking into the issues.

Progress on the Sensory Garden: Reply, very difficult to maintain as regularly waterlogged. It is constantly being weeded, mulched and has been planted with new plants, suitable to the conditions, at a cost of £200

Team Restructure timeline? Reply, Parks and Ground changes due May/June. Over 200 staff are affected.

Vacancy rates in Parks and Gardens? Reply, Didn't have figures as there is constant change/churn.

AOB

No further business was put forward.

Next Meeting

The date of the next AGM was proposed as March 2025.

Meeting closed

The meeting was closed at 19:17

Paul Cook presentation

Paul Cook gave a very interesting and engrossing presentation on his role as curator of RHS Harlow Carr.

Paul's presentation also explored the history of RHS HC, including many photographs.