

# FOVG AGM MINUTES

ST Peter's Church, Harrogate

26<sup>th</sup> March 2025:1830 | *Meeting called to order by* Peter Holmes

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## In Attendance

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Trustees: Peter Holmes (PH), Anne Grange (AG) and Andrew Jordan (AJ). PH chaired.

Guests: Kate Dawson, Community assets and engagement Manager.

Kirsty Stewart, Parks and Grounds Area Manager (West).

Paul Cook, FOVG President and Curator of RHS Harlow Carr Gardens.

Stuart Holland, Harrogate Civic Society.

Also, in attendance; Councilor Sam Gibbs, Valley Gardens & Central Harrogate.

19 members of FOVG.

Plus named guests: Total 23

Apologies: Robert Grange, Liz Chidlow, Tom and Marge Holleman, Jan Campbell, Anne Smith, Angela Dicken, Carol Spencer, Richard Jeffrey, Paul Fennimore and John Graham.

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## Approval of previous minutes and reports

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The minutes from the 2024 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 was circulated via email. No issues noted.

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## Resignations and Re-elections.

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All Trustees resigned and put forward their intention to be re-elected, with the exception of AJ who wishes to step down as a Trustee. The chair thanked AJ for his valuable work in supporting FOVG. PH continued with a verbal vote for re-appointments. Appointments of AG and PH were unanimously accepted. Liz Chidlow was re-elected in absentia.

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## Reports from AG, PH, AJ, Kirsty Stewart and Paul Cook.

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FOVG members presented reports on the following subjects: -

- Finance & Membership
- Gardening, Volunteers and Tree Trail
- Old Magnesia Well Pump Room, Sun Pavilion and Yorkshire in Bloom.

No issues were noted from the Finance report.

Kirsty delivered a Power Point Presentation covering the following subjects:

- Emphasis on renewal and rejuvenation. Attention to new features that enable a new experience for repeat visitors to VG.
- New additions to include: -
  - New beds and urns
  - New Spring bulbs planted near Bandstand
  - Rose Garden gazebo Phase I erected and planted

Plans for this year going forward to include: -

- Preparations for Yorkshire in Bloom
- Rose Garden Phase II planting
- Grass over old rose beds
- Removal of excess ivy from the colonnade
- Revamp of Crazy Golf course.

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## Questions from members

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The following questions/issues were raised by members: -

**Peter Blayney** raised the following concerns: -

1. Old Magnesia Pump Room and its condition.
2. State of Sensory Bed.
3. Toilet Tree.
4. Memorial Gates.
5. Bandstand overhanging branches.

Responses: -

1. Updates including refurbishment quotes and guttering issues.
2. Sensory bed redesign plans discussed.
3. It's staying.
4. Issues discussed regarding leaves and locks. Kirsty to follow up.
5. Tree Team informed for any necessary action.

**Chris Dicken** raised concerns regarding the number and appearance of flower beds. Kirsty responded with the vision of VG going forward to continually renew beds for new and repeat visitors to VG rather than a static and unchanging VG. Kirsty also mentioned budget restrictions and climate change as having an influence on plans.

**Anne Smith** raised the following issues: -

- 1. Bikes, Scooters and Dogs.**
- 2. Park Warden.**

Enforcement of Dog Lead Policy, Bikes, Scooters and dogs: This is considered very challenging. The main challenge being the lack of enforcement officers and powers for on-the-spot fine collection. Responsible ownership and responsible parenting were encouraged but not easily enforced.

Park Warden: - No funding available for Park Warden.

**Anne Grange** raised the issue of waste bins: Kirsty replied she would refer it to Waste Management.

**Peter Holmes** raised the issue of members of the public placing private memorial items, park bench flowers and the spreading of cremation ashes. Kirsty stated that it is NYC policy that these activities are not permitted. However, the policing of this is delicate and difficult.

**Susan Sherwin** raised a counter argument against some of the above issues. She stated that she enjoyed the flowers and messages on the park benches. She also stated she walks her dog in VG every morning along with many other responsible dog owners who pick up a lot of litter in the gardens. She also enjoyed seeing children in the gardens having fun. Kirsty noted and appreciated the litter picking activities of responsible dog owners.

The subject of an information board being placed near the petrified tree was raised. It was unanimously agreed that drawing attention to the tree would attract potential vandalism and graffiti and so, was not carried forward.

AJ enquired into the status of the defibrillator that was located at the main entrance. Kirsty explained that there were issues with an intermittent power supply, as well as vandalism of the power supply. This has led to the removal of the defibrillator.

The issue of a plaque for the Rose Gazebo was raised. NYC agreed to the costs of a plaque.

AG raised the issue of non-working lamp posts within VG. Kirsty replied this issue is still with the Street Lamp team.

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## AOB

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There was an intention to show a YouTube video of the petrified tree in VG. IT issues prevented this.

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## Next Meeting

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The date of the next AGM was proposed as March 2026.

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## Meeting closed

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The meeting was closed at 19:17

### **Stuart Holland presentation**

Stewart gave a fascinating and insightful presentation into the Town Planning process for Harrogate. Due to the suspension of Harrogate's town council, an opportunity arose to develop a citizen lead Neighbourhood Development Plan. This plan, which now has over 100 members, representing all aspects of town planning, is extremely powerful. If approved, this plan must be followed by NYC.

A major part of phase II of the Harrogate Neighborhood Development plan is the re-purposing of the West Park United Reform Church into a combination of a place of worship and Harrogate Visitor Centre. Permanent information boards would highlight Harrogate's heritage as a Spa Town, including the role VG played.

A major aim of the project is to re-acquire Harrogate's status of a World Heritage recognized Spa Town.

### **Paul Cook Presentation**

Paul gave a short update on activities at RHS Harlow Carr. Paul spoke about the acquisition and refurbishment of the Harrogate Arms into a café, highlighting its heritage and history regarding the water treatment that was available there in the past. Paul also updated the group on the creation of a new rockery in front of the Alpine House.

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