

Minutes for AGM 2023 via Zoom 6.30pm on Wednesday March 15th

Present: Anne and Robert Grange, Ann Beeby, Liz Chidlow, Andrew Jordan, Peter Holmes, Simon and Paula Collier, John and Carol Moore, Tom Holleman, Anne Broadbent, Pam Millen, Jo Farragher, Kate Dawson

1 Apologies: Martin Fish, Cllr Sam Gibbs, Peter & Jane Blayney, Neil Hind, Bill Willand, Chrissie Holmes, Mary Mann, Brian & Beryl Dunsby, Carol Spencer

LC welcomed members and Kate Dawson to the AGM and thanked HBC for the work they have been doing and for sharing their five year strategy document with the Trustees.

2 Approval of minutes: Minutes were approved; proposed Anne Grange, seconded Andrew Jordan

3 Matters arising from the Minutes:

- a) The paint colour of the OMWPR is still not altered, we await property management department. This could be done when the door repair is finished.
- b) LC thanked HBC through Kate for completing the painting in the colonnade, and resurfacing the flags.
- c) LC reported that the Tree Trail was progressing slowly, 23 trees are included and the first draft has been agreed with the council. It is likely to take more time as certain photos were still needed of key flowers. LC is liaising with HBC on the content and format. The labelling of trees is still to be resolved.

4 Trustees Annual Reports have already been circulated:

- a) Finance: AG outlined the report. The Sumup machine was explained. Expenditure mainly printing the map leaflet. Balance £12,599 and increase of £1370 in 2022. The Trustees are liaising with HBC re a suitable project now the Main Gate cleaning project is being undertaken by them. Due to conservation requirements the stonework will not be taken back very far so will still look dark, cracks and holes are being repaired. There were no questions.
- b) Membership: AG outlined the report. There are currently 88 members, although we do have new members, some from outside the area, others have moved and some have died.
- c) Trustee Report: AJ outlined the Trustee Report paying tribute to both Malcolm Neesam and David Mason. He also thanked Ann Beeby for her work for FOVG and welcomed Peter Holmes as a new volunteer. He reported that with the changes in local government administration changes would need to be made to the map leaflet which is very popular. So far 35,000 have been printed. LC commented that these are also delivered in small numbers to Ilkley, Bradford, Leeds also Huddersfield and Farsley, so encouraging footfall to Harrogate.
- d) LC thanked AJ and Tom Holleman for the work on the website and social media.
- e) Volunteer Gardening Report: LC thanked the volunteers for their hard work during the year and thanked the garden team now headed by Paul. LC reported that despite some problems with volunteers we have gained new volunteers and put in a good number of hours. The JGS has held two workshop days for the Japanese Garden which brings in expertise for key tasks. The bird boxes have now been monitored for a few years, so we are building up a record of their use. There has been a lot of clearance in the Peat Garden area to reduce self-sown plants which were taking over, and the sensory bed is undergoing a 'makeover.'

5 Resignation and Reelection of Trustees:

- a) Ann Beeby has resigned as a Trustee and acting Secretary.
- b) Peter Holmes has been put forward as a new Trustee and acting Secretary; proposed by Anne Grange and seconded by Andrew Jordan. Peter was duly voted in, and we wish him well.
- c) LC reported that Malcolm Fish, our President, wishes to resign as from March 2024, as has moved out of the area. Members were asked to make suggestions for a replacement.
- d) LC said she was also considering retiring at the next AGM, her health problems are making her position as Trustee and Volunteer Gardener orgiser more difficult.

6 Kate Dawson Community Development Officer for HBC:

- a) Colonnade; There have been a programme of repairs and improvements within the colonnades area. The Property Services department face an ongoing battle to get to repairs straight away. The ironwork has now been painted following repair, and the window frames painted and paving flags levelled. The addition of lighting to the area is an improvement, and there is less damage as a consequence.
- b) Play Area; The canopy is a great success and encourages families to stay longer in the play area as adults can shelter from inclement weather, and it will also provide shade. Picnic benches have also been replaced in this area.
- c) Boating Pool; Kirsty has had a meeting with the Claro Marine Modelers who are opposed to the addition of a fountain in the boating lake. The fountain will be able to be turned off whenever model boats are in the pond. She is hopeful that this matter can be resolved, but it is still in discussion.
- d) Streamside; This area is undergoing restoration through pruning and opening up vistas lost to tree and shrub growth. The low railings which are being installed have been recycled from other areas.
- e) Donation Posts; Three posts which accept donations for the gardens are to be installed in high footfall areas prior to the Coronation.
- f) Coronation Weekend; There will be three days of free festivities arranged by the council in Valley Gardens over the Coronation. There is an opportunity for FOVG to have a stand in the Community Hub area to promote the organisation.
- g) Memorial Benches; There is no further space for Memorial benches within the garden so a new scheme is to be devised and FOVG Trustees will be have the opportunity to consult on the proposed scheme before it is implemented.
- h) Visitor Numbers; These are over 4,000,000 only slightly reduced since the peak during Covid. Now people are travelling more.
- i) The herbaceous border alteration which schools are involved in has been put forward to the autumn. (*This alteration was due to provide some plants for the sensory bed near the OMWPR which is not looking good at present, new plants are to be purchased and planted by FOVG to improve the area*).
- j) Future Restructures; Harrogate Borough Council ceases to exist at midnight on April 1st. The staff have new phone numbers and new emails, all the original emails will work for the immediate future. As far as FOVG are concerned for the immediate future nothing will change. There is a new acting head of department in place for Parks and Environmental services as Alison has now left.

AOB

- a) Peter Blayney; Robert Grange presented the list of questions which Peter had sent in prior to the meeting to KD; These appear on an additional sheet attached with the answers added in red.
- b) LC asked KD about an email for Paul, (head gardener) as he doesn't currently have a device which accepts emails. We were assured that he would have, as all staff now have to book any leave using email for themselves rather than relying on department heads to do that.
- c) Main Gates Cleaning and repair; see annual report.
- d) Waste Bins; see Trustee Report. KD responded that the bins are currently working well and are unlikely to be moved to a less significant site. AJ said that fast food waste had been left around the bins, this is not acceptable. AJ will continue to monitor the situation and take photographs.
- e) David Mason Memorial; Kirsty feels FOVG need to come up with a workable idea which reflects the work he did on the KE Gates. This should be low maintenance. We also discussed FOVG money restoring the lighting at the main gate once existing electrical connections are established.
- f) Plant labelling; AG commented that the labelling being used for the plant labelling scheme which has been instigated for the Apprentices to implement is not sufficiently professional. Both the type of label, the

information on it and the fact that shrubs could be labelled incorrectly. (*AB has since removed a poorly labelled example in the Japanese Garden where the large Acer palmatum var. dissectum was just labelled Maple and placed with a wire wound tightly round a young stem*) If the labels are to inform the public they need to be better. This also has a bearing on the proposed Tree Trail where the ability to identify the correct tree described on the trail is very important.

- g) Members were asked whether they preferred Zoom or Face to Face meetings; the consensus was Zoom Meetings.

The meeting closed at 19.40. The next AGM will be March 2024.