

PRIORY PARK FRIENDS' GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting



Held: Wednesday 17th May 2017 at 7.30pm

Venue: St Neots Football Pavilion, Loves Farm, St Neots

Present: Ian Toye (Acting Chair) Francisca Shaw Nick Tracken
Helen Lewis David Jasper + 18 members
Linda Rowley
Matt Chudley (Huntingdonshire District Council) for item 6

1. Introduction

Ian Toye, as acting Chairman, introduced the Committee and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the last AGM held on 11th May 2016 which have been available on the website, were approved by Ian Toye and Ian Jackson as a correct copy and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. Chairman's Report for the Previous Year

- The application for Green Flag status had been submitted and the judging was scheduled for 5th June. The Committee had worked closely with HDC in developing the portfolio to ensure that the highest status possible could be obtained.
- The bird boxes sponsored by Waitrose had been put up in the eastern spinney. A project to clean out and repair the damaged boxes would be carried out in the Autumn once the nesting season was over.
- Unfortunately, the November litter pick was cancelled due to the ground being covered in a thick layer of leaves which obscured the litter. It was therefore decided that the autumn litter picks should be held in late September.

The litter pick held in March was a huge success with a record attendance supported not only by around 25 volunteers but by 60 helpers associated with the local scout troop and over 30 bags of rubbish were collected. We also got a write up in the May edition of the 'Think Local' magazine which is good publicity for promoting both the Group and the Park.

- Publicity has increased quite considerably with the introduction of the quarterly newsletters which keep members up to date with what is happening in the park. A PPFG Facebook page has been created which enables followers to ask questions and post photos of the park. The Group also includes articles in the Think Local magazine whenever possible.
- The Forest School is still a huge success with the children visiting the park weekly as demonstrated by the excellent displays provided on the evening by Linda and Trisha.

- Wood-chipping continues in the eastern spinney however the quality of the wood-chippings has not been very good. The Group were continuing to concentrate on the top section of the path due to the quality of the pathways.
- The Committee were pleased to announce that the old ice house which belonged to Priory House had been found hidden in the undergrowth on Priory Hill and were hoping to find out more about its history from local residents.
- The drug problem was still ongoing despite some arrests a few weeks back and the Committee were aware of three separate incidents involving dogs becoming ill which could have been drug related. The group would continue to monitor the situation and liaise with the police accordingly.
- The parking restrictions on Rowley Road had been enforced and parking tickets were placed on the cars who initially chose not to abide by the new restrictions. Ian was pleased to report that the area was now 'commuter free' and now being utilised by park users.
- The Chairman thanked Bob Hitchings, who had audited the books this year, at no charge. Thanks, were also given to the Football Club for allowing use of the building, also at no charge. He also thanked the Committee for all their work over the year.

4. Treasurer's Report

Francisca Shaw reported that the accounts had been audited and that the bank balance at the end of the financial year was £2307.20.

There had been three significant donations during the year from St Neots in Bloom £500.00, St Neots Town Council £1000.00 and Waitrose green token scheme £410.00.

Suggestions for spending the funds were:

- Further bird boxes for the wooded area adjacent to Huntingdon Road.
- A notice board at the Rowley Road entrance as the Group were now using the boards more regularly to keep the public informed on what's happening in the park.
- Hi-Vis vests with the Group name and logo on the back to raise the profile of the group and would be beneficial when officiating events.
- Woodland path – Investigate the possibilities of laying a firm base on the pathway in lower section of the eastern spinney.

5. Election of the Committee

Ron Jones had made the decision to stand down this year and Ian thanked him on behalf of the Committee and the members for all his hard work in running the website, his wealth of knowledge of the park and tireless work in ensuring that the bird box project was maintained. He hoped that he would continue to have an active role supporting upcoming projects. Five members, Francisca Shaw, Helen Lewis, Nick Tracken, Linda Rowley and Ian Toye were re-elected, and one new member, David Jasper, was elected.

6. Update from Huntingdonshire District Council (Matt Chudley)

Matt introduced himself to the meeting and said that Priory Park was one of the best parks around and that local residents should feel proud to have such a lovely area on their doorstep.

Matt informed that meeting that HDC wished to obtain 'Green Flag' status for all the parks within the Council boundary. It was the intention for Priory Park to be the pilot as it has all the attributes needed. He thanked both Priory Park Friends Group and the Forest School for all their help and support on collating the information for the portfolio.

Applications were judged against 8 key criteria and some of the improvements made by HDC in order for Priory Park to achieve this status included: -

- Replacing tired fences
- Tree maintenance/new planting programme
- Clearing the ditches
- Creating more activities and make it a more accessible area for a wider audience i.e. Sealed Knot enactments
- Standardise litterbins to green plastic bins
- Planting a flower meadow
- Updating the trim track
- Replacing benches where needed
- Improving the main entrance, increasing the number of parking spaces and disabled access

All trees would be assessed, and appropriate action taken on any tree that was either dead, diseased or dangerous. HDC were mindful that wildlife habitats needed to be taken in consideration prior to carrying out any work. If members had any concerns about the trees or any other matter, please could they let HDC know.

Litter had always been a problem and HDC were very aware that both the football supporters/players and Longsands School were large contributors to the amount of litter around the park. Matt confirmed that HDC would contact the school regarding the problem as it was recognised that the number of bins provided was insufficient for the volume of rubbish generated.

Concerns were raised as to the number of cars parked in the car park for long periods which included both commuters to avoid car parking charges at the station and post office staff. Matt confirmed that HDC would look into restricted parking but needed to ensure that it didn't affect park users.

7. Any Other Business

Ian Jackson informed the meeting that he had previously been informed by Cambridgeshire Council that the lower section of pathway in the eastern spinney was not recorded as a path. He would forward the information on to Ian Toye.