

Friends of Willaston Meadow

Minutes of the AGM on Tuesday 17th August 2021 at 2.00 pm at the Methodist Hall.

Present: Current Committee: Sarah Shannon, Fiona Mosley, Rachel Atkinson, Tim Ley, Elaine Mills

Members: Pam Irving, Alison Jones, (Brenda Sheard and Dorothy Stokes - Representing Sutton Strollers), Jen Williams, Marjorie Brundrit, Sue Unsworth, Jenny Jackson, Ben Jackson, Myles Hogg (Councillor), Sheila Shaw, Chris Hampshire, David Nind, Shevaun Nind, Viv Ley.

1. Welcome and Apologies: Sandra Kettiros, Alderman Graham Smith, Mrs Ann Smith, Ken Watson, Annabel Dixon, Jean King, Ruth Hampshire, Michael Ring

2. Minutes of the previous AGM: Sarah summarized the reasons for last year's AGM being postal. David Nind and Pam Irving proposed and unanimously accepted these minutes. The constitution was proposed and accepted last year and is available to view on the website.

3. and 4. Actions arising and Chair's Report for the year.

It has been an extraordinary year due to the pandemic, but the meadow has been appreciated as part of our daily walk and many found it for the first time. The bad weather last winter and large volume of people took its toll and entrances became almost impassable due to the mud. We are getting quotes for permanently improving all entrances and the path around Jackson's Pond. The first one is £8000, we expect similar for the other two. The work will likely not be done until next year, in the autumn/winter.

Meanwhile a kind donation of wood chippings from Christ Church helped when volunteers worked hard to spread it liberally over the muddy entrances and paths. The questionnaire results last summer confirmed this issue to be a priority along with keeping the meadow natural and enhancing it for wildlife. **Thanks to Ben Jackson for installing bird boxes.** Ben and Annie Hancox continued to count the birds, noting 47 species. Thank you to them for their continued support. Buzzards are now a regular sight. Also new to the meadow in 2020 were great spotted woodpeckers, house martins, mistle thrush and willow tit.

Volunteers planted wild roses near the entrances, to treat everyone to their fragrance and attract bees. Apples were plentiful, and we had our first attempt at cider making. The product had mixed reviews but I enjoyed it.

For Christmas we contributed to the Christ Church nativity trail with some shepherds and sheep in the meadow. We hope people managed to see them!

We recruited several new volunteers this year and we meet on the first Sunday of every month to try to keep the brambles and nettles under control and to trim around the fruit trees – weather and Covid permitting. A big thanks to all. In September we are having a longer session to cut down some of the trees around Dead Man's Pond and in School Wood to allow space for others. This will be under supervision.

We've also had some support from experts: Russell Grey conducted a newt survey and we are pleased that great crested newts were found to be present in Jackson's Pond (this limits our path renovations to autumn/winter). Hilary Ash did another grass survey so we can compare the results to 2013 – results are awaited.

Sadly, occupants of two of the new houses that back onto the meadow have cut back some trees and bushes without permission. They have been written to by the council. We will continue to monitor and report any activity.

Thank you to all committee members who have mastered Zoom enabling us to continue to meet. We are pleased to be meeting in person again but the committee will be saying a fond farewell to Elaine Mills, a founder member, with huge knowledge and expertise. We will be sure to continue to call on her for help. We'll also be saying farewell to Tim Ley, a committee member for many years, with a pragmatic approach to many issues. We hope to see both of you at future volunteer sessions or just for a walk around the meadow. **Also, thanks to Ken Watson who stood in as Treasurer at the start of the pandemic and has managed our accounts for two years but now wishes to stand down.**

5. Treasurer's report

An anonymous donation of £1000 helped us to have an end of year total of £2810.73 in our accounts. It will probably be used towards funds for the paths along with a lottery grant. We spent a total of £834.62. See separate sheet which was circulated at the meeting. Thanks to Ian Atkinson for auditing.

6. Committee members elections

Chair: Sarah Shannon: proposed by: David Nind, seconded by Pam Irving, **agreed.**

Treasurer: still needed

Secretary: Fiona Mosley: proposed by: Sarah Shannon, seconded by Chris Hampshire, **agreed.**

Committee Members: **Rachel Atkinson** proposed by Elaine Mills, seconded by David Nind. Sue Unsworth volunteered to join the committee **and was proposed by Sarah Shannon, seconded by Chris Hampshire.**

7. Any other business

A question was asked about the number and variety of wild flowers on the meadow. Sarah replied that there is a large variety including orchids and fritillaries, meadow cranesbill, cowslips, snowdrops etc, but you do have to look for them!