**Minutes of Friends of Crofton and Sparrow Woods Committee Meeting at 6.30pm**

6 June 2023 by Zoom

**Present:**

Jane Andrews

John Bray (agenda item 1 & part of 2)

Karen King

Claire Osborn

Kirsty Blackman

Penny Read *i*dverde (item 2 only)

**Apologies:** Ian Wright (*i*dverde) and John Bray for remainder of meeting (failed broadband connection)

**1. Welcome & discuss draft minutes of AGM**

It was noted that the minutes of the previous Committee meeting were not available, and it was agreed to clear the minutes of this meeting and the previous meeting at our next meeting.

**Action point 1: John to bring the draft minutes of our previous meeting to our next meeting for agreement ahead of publication.**

**Action point 2: Jane to prepare the minutes for this meeting.**

The AGM minutes provided by John were discussed and agreed with some minor changes.

**Action point 3: Jane to amend AGM minutes and include them in the June newsletter, as well as adding them to the website in due course.**

**2. Update on projects**

**2.1 Playground refurbishment**

Karen updated the meeting on the progress with expending the Platinum Jubilee Funding allocation. The Council’s preferred suppliers’ charges meant that the equipment to be procured was being reduced to fit the funds available. It was noted that other Friends Groups were very concerned about the high cost of using the preferred supplier. Karen said that she was near to a final agreement with Angela Wood from *i*dverde on the details of what would be supplied for the playground, and was content with the stage reached.

The final Work Group of the season was on 27 June, and would be dedicated to refurbishing the playground. Penny confirmed that her team in *i*dverde were providing the paint, would be sanding down the equipment ahead of painting, and had a template to paint the proposed hopscotch on the ground. The paint was quick drying, but she had warning tape available. After discussion it as agreed that Penny would contact Busy Bees Play Group (Michelle) to see if their children would like to provide hand prints - Penny would provide gloves.

Karen noted that she would need to provide information to FoC&SW members on 22 or 23 June in the usual way about the meeting point and what to wear, in the similar manner to Jane’s emails (Jane will be in the Central Asia and without a computer). Claire provided Karen with the groups.io email address for all members.

The new equipment was still expected within the next couple of months – although the timing of the Environment Agency’s move of the fencing was less clear.

**Action point 4:**  **Karen to email members, lead the 27 June Work Group, and take photos to share with Jane for the September newsletter**.

**2.2 Park benches**

Penny explained that the rainbow benches previously offered were not available. *I*dverde were planning to refurbish the stolen bench found by John Bray, which they had recovered. It was agreed that the bench should be installed in one of the vacate bench base positions in the recreation ground alongside the horses’ field.

Penny proposed waiting a few months to see if the spate of theft and vandalism had abated.

**2.3 Interpretation board grant bids**

The second bid of Platinum Jubilee Funding for two interpretation boards for the south side of the woods (St Thomas Open Space) was progressing (that is a separate electoral ward). *I*dverde had insisted that FoC&SW must not make a second bid (although other Friends Groups have), and Crofton Residents Association had kindly agreed to jointly sponsor the bid. *I*deverde were pricing up the boards with their preferred contractor, as they expected the costs to be higher that those found online via Google. We would need to await their response, before considering the case to challenge on VFM grounds.

**24. Sewage monitoring**

Kirstie had undertaken regular monitoring since 19 April. No sewage had been traced in the eastern branch of the stream, and the pipes running into it appeared to be surface water overflows. Levels were very poor on the western branch in the last week, even though there had not been an officially notified discharge since 10 May. Kristie noted that the Ember Close water drain into the stream included dishwasher or washing machine water with was polluting the stream, and we would need to decide how to work with households to find out whose had been misconnected,

Some samples had been sent for laboratory testing, and the results were awaited.

**Action point 5: Kirstie to provide Jane with a few words to include in the June newsletter by Thursday (8 June)**

**3. Decisions sought**

**3.1 Hi-vis Jackets – seeking agreement to buy**

A member had suggested that the Group should have hi-vis yellow waistcoats with the Group’s logo for use on Work Groups, litter picking or at events etc. Jane said it was cheapest to have the logo just on the back – about 50p more to have it on the front as well. The Group agree that front and back would be better. Jane’s quick estimate of costs was about £7 for medium and £7.90. Expenditure on 10 of each size was agreed by the Committee.

**Action point 6: Jane to circulate details of the design plans for the vest in August.**

**3.2 Additional banner – seeking agreement to buy**

The current 6 foot long banner was proving effective. A Group member had strongly suggested that we also have a shorter 2 foot banner along the line of ‘join here’ . The last banner cost £42, so costs should be similar or less. This expenditure was agreed, and it was suggested that the banner include a QR code.

**Action point 7: Jane to share a design proposal in August**

**3.3 Applying for charity status – seeking a decision on whether to explore a members’ proposal**

A Group members strongly suggested that FoC&SW turn itself into a charity – as it would then be possible to approach local businesses for sponsorship and raise funds for projects, while the donor could write the expenditure off against Corporation Tax.

The Committee discussed the proposal at length. The advice of Bromley Friends Forum had been sought – which said that some Friends Groups had gone down the charity route, but it was a lengthy process and viewed as little benefit for the additional bureaucracy.

The Committee noted that large new projects were resource intensive, and moved a little away from our main ambition which was to improve what we have. On balance this should not proceed at this stage, but we should review in a years’ time when the organisation was more mature. It was too much to take on at this stage.

**4. Membership – Claire**

There continued to be a slow trickle of new members. Claire’s main concern was that there were around 90+ people on the mailing list, and yet only 29 had completed the form to agree to our various policies. Closing that gap was agreed to be the priority. The way forward on chasing non-respondents agree was for Claire to provide material for the June newsletter, and then follow that up with a targeted email to those who had still not responded two weeks or so after Karen’s message to all members later in June. That was a logical series of steps, and avoided a deluge of members emails.

**Action point 8: Claire to provide Jane with copy for the newsletter by Thursday 8 June.**

**Action point 9: Claire to follow up with non-responding members in July**

**5. Treasurer’s report** - Karen

Update on financial position: £2008.08 in the current account, which included some membership renewals, £150 from the Friends Forum for completing their data form, and the takings from the coffee morning – Karen was particularly pleased with the amount raised at that event.

**6. Future opportunities to widen awareness of FoC&SW** – all

The Committee discussed other events – with Karen’s proposal for a wreath making session in the late autumn receiving support. Claire said that Crofton School had charged £50 for such an event. The meeting concluded that that was too high, so it was important to cost up the event carefully before proceeding.

**Action point 10: Karen will cost up the event and circulate a paper to the Committee for a decision ahead of the next Committee meeting**

The Committee noted that the Summer Walk was planned for 20 August.

**Action point 11: Jane to advertise on NextDoor, Facebook and Orpington Gossip as well as with the residents associations.**

**7. AOB**

**7.1 August leaflets campaign**

A member had indicated interest in raising membership by leafletting streets neighbouring the woods. Claire expressed concern whether the cost of printing and the effort needed would achieve sufficient response to make the proposal worth while. It was agreed to cost up leafletting the streets with houses very close to the woods, and see what the response was like before committing further. Some of the Committee were happy to help with delivery.

**Action point 12 : Jane to cost up a small leafleting campaign, and share that information for a decision in August.**

**8. Agree timing and date of next meeting**

6.30pm Tuesday 3 October 2023 by Zoom

Jane Andrews

(Minutes agreed at the Committee Meeting on 3 October 2023