

## Minutes of Friends of Preston Park (FoPP) AGM

*3rd November 2018*

Present: Sue Shepherd (Chair) Carol Cole (Vice Chair) Clive Shepherd (Treasurer), Sue Shanks, Joe McNulty Keith Upton and Siriol Hugh-Jones (members of the Committee), Alan Griffiths ( Head of Operations Cityparks), and approximately 50 members of FOPP and the public.

Apologies: Rose Jones and Dimitri Mehandziski (members of the Committee), Garry Meyer (Park Ranger)

1. The Chairman opened the AGM by welcoming everyone, introducing the members of the committee, and setting out the agenda. She also thanked St Peters Church for hosting the AGM.
2. The first item was a talk given by Michelle Furtarda, Vice Chair of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces, on 'The State of Parks in the South East'. Since her last talk to FOPP two years ago, Michelle outlined how the group had been working hard to raise the profile nationally on just how important parks are for the UK's overall welfare, and that they have made a successful lottery bid of £2.5m towards several conservation and restoration projects. Parks suffer financially at national and local level by not being a governmental statutory service, and there is now a national Park Action Group to try to change this. Meanwhile parks in the South East are suffering due to underfunding, and volunteers are increasingly underpinning services to ensure that parks are properly looked after. In many areas, partnerships between volunteer groups and Councils are proving to be successful and productive. Michelle also warned of the real danger that some parks and open spaces could be lost by councils selling off parts for housing and other developments. Once this happens, they are lost forever. No new parks have been established for many years, as most councils now view them as an on-going liability. Again, active and prompt lobbying by local and national groups is needed. Her message to FOPP members was that parks are a foundation for the community and everyone deserves to have one within walking distance. People should value such assets by actively working to protect our parks and getting involved as a volunteer.

Michelle's talk was very well received, and it was agreed that parks and open spaces are needed today more than ever as so many people, many with children, now live in flats and have no access to gardens. The Chairman thanked Michelle warmly for her talk.

3. Chair Sue Shepherd gave her annual Chair's report, commenting on the events and changes that have taken place over the last 12 months. The full report is attached. She also proposed thanks to the Park staff, local councillors and MP Caroline Lucas for their continuing support.
4. The Vice Chair also reported that the Committee had taken note from last year's AGM calling for information about FOPP to be available on social media, and that as a result we now have a Facebook page and Twitter account.

5. The Treasurer gave his annual report. The starting balance was £2,080.22 and the ending balance was £1973.16. The full report is attached.
6. The Chair asked those present for their approval of the current committee continuing their work for another year, and this was given.
7. The meeting was then opened for questions from the public, and Alan Griffiths, Operations Manager Cityparks, answered many. Subjects covered included:
  - Concerns about fly tipping in the Park. Alan stated that Cityclean is responsible for investigating and dealing with any incidents, aided by CCTV in the parking area. Members of the public should contact Cityclean directly.
  - Repair of several damaged flagstones on the path near the wildflower garden. Alan stated the damage was done over the Pride weekend, and the Pride reinstatement fund was being used for the cost of repair, which is due to take place shortly.
  - Questions were raised about why the Council did not include access for community events in the contract for the old Bowling Pavilion with the Fitnesshub. It was reported that this had not been possible.
  - Why the wildflower garden was not watered properly in the summer, and therefore failed this year? Alan stated that although the mix of seeds planted was supposed to tolerate dry conditions, this summer's weather had been exceptionally dry for a very prolonged period. Although watering took place during the germination period, there were no resources to continue the watering for the following weeks. However, it is understood that the seed bank now built up in the soil should lead to a splendid display next year, as long as there is not a repeat of this year's very dry conditions. Also, two new picnic tables have been purchased for the area.
  - Concerns were expressed about the state of the Clock Tower. Alan confirmed that it is part of the heritage of Preston Park and essential repairs will take place very soon by a specialist contractor.
  - A question was also asked about why dogs are allowed into the velodrome area despite a notice on the gate banning them. Alan replied that following deregulation, councils can no longer ban dogs from such areas, and the notice is in fact no longer applicable. He does recognise the potential dangers of dogs on the cycle track but has no power to take action.

8. Photo Competition. The results of the annual FoPP competition were as follows:

Winner Sports and Recreation: Jill Anderson

Winner Landscapes: Miranda Glavin

Winner Flora and Fauna: Simon Wheeler

Winner People and Pets – and overall winner: Jill Anderson

Clive announced that a 2019 Calendar had already been produced using the entries from this year's completion and were on sale at £5 each.

9. The meeting was closed by a vote of thanks from those attending to the FoPP Chair and committee for all their hard work over the year.