

## Friends of Abbey Fields

### The Fifteenth Annual General Meeting

Held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at the Senior Citizens Club,

Abbey End Car Park, Kenilworth

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed everyone.
2. **Apologies** for absence were received from Catriona Woods, Brenda Heath, Pat Smith, Jill Pugh, Clive Stone and Heather Alford.
3. **The minutes of the Annual General Meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2016** were approved.
4. **Matters Arising:** None

5. **Chairman's Report:**

David Pettifor in his Chairman's report said that the year had been difficult following the resignations of both Keith Rockett and Celia Rickers in January and reminded the meeting that the Friends' committee was made up of volunteers committed to ensuring that Abbey Fields was managed for the enjoyment of all. However he wished to thank Keith Rockett for all his work as Chairman, particularly last year when he oversaw the installation of the fitness stations in the Fields at a cost of over £6000.

The annual series of "walks and talks" continued to be successful thanks to the efforts of David Rickers but DP said that the Committee had food for thought as at the last Bat evening none of those attending were members.

The Lions Show was again a popular and financially successful day with £142.00 raised on the Human One-Arm-Bandit. However the principal aim was to ensure that our profile was kept high in the public's eye.

DP informed the meeting that the 2018 Calendar is now available and Bart will deal with this later; however he congratulated him for his efforts in producing the Calendar, well up to previous years, and thanked him for all his hard work. Similarly, thanks go to Brian and John Emmerson for their continued support of the Friends in printing the Calendar and also (free of charge) our Newsletter.

Tonight sees changes in the structure of the Committee with Joan Rockett, David Rickers and Gordon Mitchell all standing down after each with at least ten years on the Committee.

However we have been fortunate that four members have volunteered to join the Committee. DP had no doubt that they will all make an impact and move the Friends forward into a new and possibly challenging future, and thanked them for volunteering and wished them every success.

For himself, whilst he wishes to remain on the Committee, he is moving into "semi-retirement" to give background and advice when needed.

## 6. Treasurers Report & Accounts:

### Income: Comments

The Finances were considered to be in a good condition.

Total income for the year was £13,898.80.

The income from subscriptions was higher due to a change in the year end and therefore reflected 2 years subscriptions

The benefit of being registered for Gift Aid brought in an additional £259.22.

Lions Show profit was £142.

Calendar Sponsors income is always received in advance of the costs and in the accounts but the costs of printing will be in next year's accounts.

### Costs: Comments

The largest expense was in respect of the Trim Stations that had been installed and now considered a real success.

FOAF incurred the usual costs for the activities it organised,

***The Accounts were proposed by Rosamund Comins and seconded by Lizzie Lofthouse.***

### Subscriptions

Given the healthy state of finances, it was proposed to keep the annual membership at £7.50. There are no major projects planned.

***Motion proposed by Roger Frost and seconded by Gordon Cain.***

### Free Calendar

Gordon announced the committee had agreed to provide a free calendar to each member for the first time this year.

### New Auditor

Given Gordon's retirement from the FOAF he stated that the Auditor would also be resigning having performed the task voluntarily and FOC during Gordon's 10 year period as Treasurer.

Gordon expressed support for the new Treasurer and stated he would be happy to assist with the handover.

## 7. Membership & Website

Sam Sexton reported:

Since the last AGM, we had 14 members who died, moved away or did not renew for other reasons. However, we now have 188 personal and two corporate members, plus two honorary ones. 76 personal members have paid for the coming year (new or renewals), with 112 yet to renew. Neither corporate member has renewed.

You are probably blissfully unaware of it, but the current Data Protection Act will be replaced by the EU General Data Protection Regulations from 25 May 2018 and this will be incorporated into UK law. This implements more stringent requirements for

the holding of personal data. By that time, we need to have obtained your explicit approval to hold your information (name, postal and email addresses, phone numbers), so we will be sending out a consent form in due course.

### **Website**

Not a lot to report - it keeps on rolling along, but any comments or suggestions are always welcome. In 2016 we had an average of 506 unique visitors and 651 visits to the site per month and so far this year the averages are 358 users and 441 visits.

Given that we have under 200 members, this seems rather more than I would have expected, but it's not possible to tell where these users are located (at present – I turned on more detailed logging last week). The figure excludes automated web crawlers, but not hackers, so there might be a few of those, but we don't allow comments and I've seen no evidence of intrusion, so we appear to be safe. People trying to hack websites is just part of the internet. I have installed Wordfence, which helps protect our site and also provides technical information of new risks. Streetlife.com was taken over by an American company, Nextdoor, which required more personal information than I was prepared to give, so we don't use its successor.

8. **Newsletter:** Catriona has been responsible for the publications this year and DP and the FOAF Committee agreed that the content and style had much improved.
9. **FOAF Activities, Events & Litter Picks:** David Rickers informed the meeting that he was stepping down this year and as part of the process he had handed the litter pick activity over to Bart. The activity had proved to remain well supported with the average number of bags varying from 3-5 which compared to c8, in the past, was a considerable improvement. David was quick to point out the social side of the litter pick remained important with paid refreshments after each pick. Other activities included for the first time for some time a Tree walk which replaced the Meadow Walk – this proved to be very popular with 19 attendees. At the Bird walk a total of 26 species of bird were heard or seen. The Bat Walk was extremely well supported too with 22 attendees. The next event is the Moth Evening, led by David Brown, on the 8<sup>th</sup> August at 9pm. All were welcome. David stated after 10 good years he had decided to retire from the post and wanted to thank everyone for their support over the years.
10. **Calendars:** Bart explained that it had been a team effort in producing the calendar. However, different to previous years the photographs were submitted as part of a competition. There were c150 seasonal photographs from c20-30 entrants - both members and non-members. The first round to select the monthly winners was judged by Joan Rockett and David Rickers. The front and rear cover were selected at an event held at the Almanack, which sponsors, distributors, members and photographers were invited to

attend. It was a very successful event and the final judging was completed by our Mayor, Kate Dickson. An additional feature this year is that the calendar has been populated with the annual events of FOAF as well as some of the other well-known events carried out by the many charities in Kenilworth. The task now was to sell the calendars and in this respect Bart sought the assistance of the full membership of FOAF. Bart thanked everyone involved for their support and assistance.

11. **Honouring our Retiring Committee Members.** David Pettifor then made a presentation to each of the retiring members of the Committee saying that all had overseen the Friends grow from less than three dozen to its current membership of over 180. That however was just a statistic and did not indicate the resolve, enthusiasm and commitment to the Committee and to the Friends. All had their own individuality and ideas but we have worked together with a lot of laughter which at times made running a meeting somewhat difficult. However the outcome would always be for the benefit of the Friends. He thanked Dave Rickers for selling the Calendar and organising the field events; Joan Rockett for singlehandedly trebling the membership and for producing amazing Christmas trees, and Gordon Mitchell for maximising our income with a minimum of fuss, always with his dry stonewall Yorkshire humour. On behalf of all the members he thanked each individually and presented them with a cut glass paper weight.

## 12. Election of Officers & Committee 2017/18

David Pettifor announced that whilst he was stepping down from the role of Chairman he would continue on the Committee. The following people were then voted on to the FOAF Committee:

**Chairman:** Ojars Bartmanis

**Membership & Website:** Sam Sexton

**Treasurer:** David Yeowell

**Secretary:** Catriona Woods

**Additional Members:** David Pettifor, Rose Ruddick, Joy Margerum, Adam Beresford-Browne

**Each new member gave a brief background for the benefit of the meeting.**

## REFRESHMENTS

### 13. Open Discussion & Questions

*Q1 Was there any update on the path into Abbey Fields from High Street / Malthouse Lane?*

David Pettifor had spoken with Councillor Coker and was informed that as soon as the initial consultation was complete he would refer back to FOAF.

*Q2 Children were climbing along the fencing in the play area. Was there anything that could be done to stop this?*

Jon Holmes stated the play area conformed to RoSPA rules and that parents had to be responsible for their children's behaviour. The Play area could not be supervised 24 hrs per day. One member spoke highly of the play area and what had been achieved.

**Q3** *Himalayan Balsam was spreading in Abbey Fields. What was being done?*

Jon Holmes was very much aware of the problem and stated that he was limited by resources but would welcome a collaborative effort with FOAF members to attack the spread of the plant when he returned from his vacation.

#### **14. Chairman's Closing Remarks**

Bart, having studied the Kenilworth Neighbourhood Plan and attended the recent meeting at St Francis Church, referred to the huge challenges facing Kenilworth. The need to build 1,500 homes, a new school and leisure facilities and the development of an efficient road infrastructure, whilst preserving the quality of people's lives in Kenilworth will not be an easy task. Never mind HS2. So trying to protect our environment and the legacy of Abbey Fields will be elevated in importance.

Abbey Fields is the jewel in Kenilworth's crown and an elderly friend of his had stated how Abbey Fields had improved dramatically over the years.

Bart wanted to personally and sincerely thank those long serving committee members to whom so much of this success was attributable.

- Joan Rockett – for having the courage to knock on doors and increase the membership
- Gordon Mitchell – our Treasurer who had diligently been managing FOAF purse strings
- And David Rickers, the face of FOAF who has each year led the litter picks and activities.

Bart was hoping they would all remain members and support the newly formed committee.

The FOAF Committee now looked forward to our first meeting and the opportunity to serve and support the needs of Abbey Fields in representing the membership. We would seek ways to engage with you all so we could all enjoy the fruits of our labour and continue the good work that has been done in the past.

Thank You

**The meeting was officially closed at 9pm.**