



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Cannizaro Park

Via Zoom, 7pm Monday, 7th June, 2021

Present: Trustees: Catherine Nelson (Chair), Simon Ingall (Treasurer), Pit Rink (Secretary), Chris Mountford, Jeremy Lumbers, Caroline Newsholme, Anna Watkin.
and further Members: Stuart Vere, Stephen Nelson, Sherril Ingall, Jessica & John Lawrence, Susan Cusack, James Stettler, Mary Ann & Steven Turnbull, Juliet Willis, Alison Pattenden, Alan Blower, Clive Hilton, Ann Cantrell, Donald Hearn, Michael Norman-Smith, Patty Robertson, Johnny Rink, Simon & Belinda Leathes. The meeting was declared quorate. Also in attendance: Maggie Dean (volunteer member).

The Chair welcomed all, and explained that the meeting would not spend much time reporting on the Trustees' Report as all had been made aware, in the Notice of the AGM, that the papers were available on the FoCP website. No questions about these papers had been sent in advance of the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Rosie Gent, Anne Peacock, Marguerite Vaughan-Payne.

2. **Minutes of the last AGM**

The minutes of AGM held on 5 July, 2020 were approved.

3. **Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2021**

The Treasurer briefly discussed the Financial Statements, noting the positive impact of the crowdfunding and other donations for the Front Entrance project and the negative effects that Covid had on regular activities. The Report was accepted.

4. **Election/Re-election of trustees**

All the current trustees had indicated that they were happy to stand again. Juliet Willis proposed that Anna Watkin be elected, and that Chris Mountford, Simon Ingall, Jeremy Lumbers, Catherine Nelson, Caroline Newsholme, Anne Peacock, Pit (Elizabeth) Rink all be re-elected, to serve until the conclusion of the next AGM. These proposals were seconded by Stuart Vere and unanimously approved.

5. **Re-appointment of Independent Examiner**

Colin Price was thanked for his work as Independent Examiner of the Financial Statements and is willing to continue. Juliet Willis proposed and Stuart Vere seconded his re-appointment to serve until the conclusion of the next AGM, and this was unanimously approved.

6. Amendments to the Constitution

Caroline Newsholme explained that the reasoning behind the proposed changes was to make the Charity's objectives more understandable, allowing the Friends freedom to support the London Borough of Merton in its management of its Grade II listed park as it sees fit. The Charity Commission has approved the change. Secondly a clarification to membership criteria ensures it now includes those who joined as life members in the past. Stuart Vere thanked Caroline for her drafting and emphasised the importance of distinguishing between the responsibilities of the Council and the activities of the Friends. It was agreed that visitors to the Park were not as aware as they might be of the dichotomy and more could be done to explain this.

Chris Mountford pointed out that the Friends are part of the Independent Merton Parks Group, a collective actively engaging with the Parks Department, whose aim is to stimulate a more responsive attitude from the Council to their responsibilities. Confirmation was given that the Friends are not liable for any damage to the public from falling trees.

The amendments were proposed by Jeremy Lumbers, seconded by MaryAnn Turnbull and unanimously agreed.

7. Current Activities and Future plans

The Chair noted that the prime aims of the Friends are to improve the Park and to build visitors' appreciation and engagement with the Park. She explained through a series of slides the achievements of the past year including the renovation of the front entrance, replanting of the Tennis Court Garden and informative labelling of over 100 of the special trees including QR codes. This has been made possible by the increase in the number of hands-on volunteers, now equivalent to one full time gardener. The volunteers have also enabled the refurbishing and reopening of the public toilets in partnership with Hotel du Vin and London Borough of Merton.

Organisational volunteers have set up a new membership system, publish a monthly e-newsletter with a circulation of over 1000, and manage an Instagram account with over 2000 followers, and over the next year there will be a website redesign. Plans for 2021-2 include renewing the Rose Garden with assistance from RHS Wisley and Landform Landscape Architects, and establishing a Bog Garden above the pond. We continue to assess the viability of keeping the toilets open (considered a priority by respondents to our 2020 visitor survey).

A backlog of maintenance by the Council had caused serious flooding and drainage issues particularly in the Italian Garden. Hopefully we are making progress with the Council to rectify the problems.

The Friends has expanded its events, introducing new visitors to the Park. A recent Nature Weekend and last year's Well-being Weekend (the ICANN festival) have been very well received. Professionally guided walks are proving popular. A future event is Art in the Park.

8. Questions/comments

Several members commented on the amazing difference in the park during the last year, thanking past and present trustees, and expressing enthusiasm for the future plans. Concern was raised about the lack of regular lawn mowing along the front entrance. The Chair clarified the relationship between idverde, the council contractors, and the Friends. All projects are discussed with both idverde and the Council and the future commitment is agreed. Part of the plan for the front entrance planting was for reduced maintenance under the trees. Concern was expressed over loss of plants in periods of drought. The Friends have bought industrial hoses to better manage watering of new planting by the volunteers. Future planting plans will prefer plants that need less watering.

A member asked if and when face-to-face talks would be resumed. Depending on there being no restrictions, the Chair hoped that there could be an autumn talk at the Hotel du Vin this year, with drinks afterwards.

9. Any other business

The Chair thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8pm.