

FRIENDS OF COOMBE WOOD



Chairman T. Isherwood

Treasurer T. Tokeley

Secretary John Rostron

431 Kents Hill Rd.,
Benfleet, Essex. SS7 4AD

01268 757984

johnmargaret.rostron@tiscali.co.uk

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Coombe Wood held on Monday November 28th 2016, at 28 Thundersley Grove.

Present

Terry Isherwood, Terry Tokeley, John Rostron, Gwyn Jordan, Eileen Peck, Martin Westlake, Barry Clarke and Peter Hughes.

Apologies

Sue Speakman had sent apologies.

[2016].01. Minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting of 11th November 2014

These were accepted as correct, proposed by the Chair.

Accepted

[2016].02. Matters Arising

From 6.03 (Boundary Markers): Castle Point Council had declined to put in place markers to indicate the boundary of their land.

[2016].03. Chairman's Report

I am pleased to say that, after a rest last year, FOC has picked up the mantle again and the committee is willing to continue in their posts. Both ECC and CPBC regard FOC as representing the community's interest in maintaining Coombe Wood.

The end of Lake Drive has been tidied up by the resident(s) and looks much nicer. This has led some people to wonder if access is still possible there. This tidying does not affect any right of way. We should mention this in our next Newsletter, with photographs.

John, our secretary, has done an excellent job in maintaining the web site and we intend to continue this. John also compiled the last newsletter that was professionally printed and has been well received. It is proposed to have two or three newsletters a year at defined times and to continue to have them professionally printed. The photographs came out particularly well. John also compiled a threefold leaflet giving the history and opportunities that Coombe Wood offers.

We are pleased to see that a Forest School is now in operation at Kingston Primary School and is making good use of Coombe Wood.

All that remains of the dreaded fence at the northern end of Coombe Wood is the section adjoining the Church field. FOC removed the rest with the agreement of the Allens which means the public can now

move freely and uninhibitedly between the Southern and Northern VGs and access the VGs from the old graveyard. The Allens' say they have donated the northern fence to the Church who now claim it is on their land. Although the fence is still in place, it is still possible to access the wood from each end. Legally claiming the fence is on the VG according to the evidence given at the inquiry irrespective of who the owner now is would be expensive. We hope that changes resulting from the retiring of Marion, the rector, and a new PCC may well alter the Church's view on the fence.

The Chairman's report was accepted, proposed by Gwyn Jordan and seconded by Terry Tokeley

[2016].04. Treasurer

Treasurer's Narrative

There was no AGM held for the Fiscal year 2015, therefore this report covers all financial matters for the period 1st November 2014 through to 31st October 2016.

Over the two year period our membership has remained reasonably stable at the AGM in 2014, I reported there were 52 members and at the 2016 AGM I can confirm that to date we have a membership of 43. The reduction in membership is probably due to the reduction in the committee activity and lower level of communication issued during the two year period.

Our current cash reserve at the Bank is somewhat higher than expectations and this is primarily due to the amicable solution to the removal of the Allen's fencing, which did not incur on our part any legal expenditure and the generosity of our members in making donations that are almost equal to the membership subscriptions.

Items of expenditure detailed later in this report, include our continued membership of the Open Spaces Society, maintenance of our website and more recently printing costs to provide an improved presentation of our newsletter and the provision of a hand out in the form of a threefold flyer.

Bank Account

Friends of Coombe Wood have a dedicated bank account with Barclays (Rayleigh Branch). Cheques require two signatures from the authorised committee members.

To address the changes to the committee officers agreed at the 2014 AGM, the bank procedures have been complied with in order to register new bank account signatories and a revised mailing address.

Fiscal year 2017

The Friends of Coombe Wood fiscal year 2017, runs from 01/11/2016 to 31/10/2017.

Expenditure for 2014–2015

Open Spaces Society (DD 02/11/2014)	£ 45.00
Open Spaces Society (DD 03/11/2015)	£ 45.00
Basildon Printing (Newsletter 05/08/2016)	£ 66.00
Basildon Printing (Threefold Flyer 14/10/2016)	£ 76.00
Total	£ 232.00

	In	Out
Opening bank balance at 1 st November 2014:	£ 1 756.99	
Income (memberships, donations and grants):	£ 885.00	
Expenditure:		£ 232.00
Closing bank balance at 1 st November 2016:	£ 2 409.99.*	

*Actual amount in bank

Expenditure Provisions for 2017

Display Boxes for Flyers:	£ 34.32
Open Spaces (DD December 2016):	£ 45.00
Maintenance of FOC Website (estimated):	£ 50.00
Revisions/Updating Notice Board (estimated):	£ 150.00

The estimated costs to maintain the Website and Notice Boards are to be confirmed by the Secretary.

Projected income for 2017

The Treasurer recommends that we keep the fee at £ 5 per household and the committee has accepted that recommendation, which is to be ratified at the AGM.

Agreed

Total projected income for 2017 is estimated at approximately £ 450.00 based on the number and generosity of the current membership

Other matters

Subscriptions are due from November 1st. There will be a reminder on this in the next Newsletter.

The Treasurer's report was accepted, proposed by Peter Hughes and seconded by John Rostron.

[2016].05. Election of Officers and Committee

Of the existing committee, the Chair, Terry Isherwood, the Treasurer, Terry Tokeley, the Secretary, John Rostron, and one of the current committee members, Sue Speakman, are all willing to continue. Alan Morley, a previous committee member has stood down. Gwyn Jordan has been co-opted since the last AGM. The meeting agreed that these would continue in their current roles.

Agreed

[2016].06. Aims, Objectives and Strategies for 2017

06.01 The Neighbourhood Grant we were made for the Notice Boards covers the construction of four boards. We have the material for the fourth. The Chair asked if we should construct the fourth board and where we should site it.

Members agreed to the construction of a new board to be sited at the access point at the southern end of the graveyard.

Agreed

Terry Russel has the materials. The chair will ask him if he will do the construction.

Action: Terry Isherwood

06.02 Eileen Peck asked about Litter Picks. The chair stated that we have had a pick recently and that we would have another if it becomes necessary.

06.03 Members agreed to have two newsletters a year, in April and October. We will send copies of the Newsletter to designated Council Officers (in particular Bill Snow).

06.04 The secretary had recently written to the Open Spaces Society asking for advice on our

Friends of Coombe Wood Annual General Meeting, November 28th 2017

Page 3 of 4

Signed..... (Chair)

..... (Date)

managing the wood as a Village Green including managing trees for public safety and building a bridge over the stream. He also asked about:

- Making a claim for ownership, with the assumption that if there is no counter-claim within ten years, then we would establish title.
- Negotiating with the local council to manage areas they own.
- Obtaining Public Liability Insurance to cover any management that we do.

The reply from Hugh Craddock was quite extensive, but the crux is in the following paragraphs:

Every local authority for the land (*i.e.* Essex County Council and Castle Point District Council: I understand that there is no town or parish council) has powers under section 45 of the Commons Act 2006 to take action to protect land which is registered as a town or village green but where there is no registered proprietor, and the owner cannot be identified. These powers are essentially negative in character: they enable the council to deal with trespasses and encroachments, but not to manage the land through positive improvements.

Finally, the district council has powers under Part I of the Commons Act 1899 to “make a scheme for the regulation and management” of a common (so defined in section 15 to include a green), the effect of which is to vest the regulation and management of the common (in this case, the green) in the council. The scheme may be vetoed by any owner of the land (although in theory, the scheme could be drawn, or redrawn, to exclude land where a veto is likely). It seems that a scheme must be made “with a view to the expenditure of money on the drainage, levelling, and improvement of the common, and to the making of bylaws and regulations for the prevention of nuisances and the preservation of order on the common.” If such a scheme were made, the council could enter into an agreement with the Friends to carry out certain management activities on its behalf.

None of these options is a wholly satisfactory solution to the difficulties you describe. I’m afraid there is no easy resolution to these difficulties. Even if the district council were willing to make a scheme, it is likely that at least some of the landowners (where they are known) would veto it, making it impossible to make a scheme for the management of the two greens as a single unit. We can however advise further if a scheme is contemplated.

Your committee will consider how to take this forward.

- 06.05** The website will be updated with recent information such as the Open Spaces Society correspondence, and recent wildlife observations. The Chair will supply John with the older, missing Newsletters to add as well as the recent one.. **Action: Terry Isherwood**

Members are invited to report any wildlife to John as webmaster.

[2016].07. Any Other Business

- 07.01** There have been two visits from Essex CC contractors to signpost the new bridleways. There are no current plans for these to be surfaced. Apparently ECC has powers to designate a bridleway on land of unknown ownership.

The meeting finished at 9.50pm.