

FRIENDS OF COOMBE WOOD



Chairman Gwyn Jordan

Treasurer T. Isherwood

Secretary John Rostron

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Coombe Wood held on Thursday January 16th 2024 at 7.30pm at St Peter's Small Hall, Thundersley

Present

John and Margaret Rostron, Estelle and Melvyn Westlake, Gwyn and Doreen Jordan, Sue and Ted Speakman, Eileen Peck, Roy French and two others.

In Attendance

Ian Finlayson, Nigel Lewis, Terry Clark.

Apologies

Terry Isherwood and Alan Morley had sent apologies.

[2023].01 Welcome

The Chairman Gwyn Jordan welcomed members to the AGM.

[2023].02 Minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting on January 5th, 2023 and the Extraordinary General Meeting on October

The minutes of these meetings had been made available on the Friends' website and copies circulated at the meeting. The Chairman said that he was taking these two meetings together.

There were no matters of accuracy and no matters arising not otherwise covered in the agenda.

The Chairman proposed that the minutes be accepted. Members agreed to this.

Accepted

The Chairman signed and dated the minutes of both meetings as an accurate record.

[2023].03 Chairman's Report

The Chairman, Gwyn Jordan, began by thanking the Secretary for his work in producing the newsletter and for keeping the website up-to-date. He also thanked the treasurer for getting our banking system up and running.

Gwyn then commented on how we are able to enjoy Coombe Wood and how we would welcome more help from younger members. The aging committee are not as able as they were in physical tasks like litter picking and clearing paths. We are currently preparing new notices for our boards and will welcome assistance in installing these.

We have had two major concerns over recent times one relates to the private woodland at the end of

Lake Drive which has recently changed hands where the fence running along the bridleway number 58 was positioned too close to the bridleway and was actually on the Village Green itself. The other major concern related to the property on the London Road near the top of Bread and Cheese Hill where about 20 feet of Village Green had been encroached upon.

The first of these issues had been presented to the local council by a request from Alan Morley that they put an enforcement order on the owner to reposition the fences. Nothing happened for a long time and eventually it was discovered that the local authority planning department did not feel it was a sufficiently good case on which to take any action. However, Alan Morley, after having spoken to the new owner of the plot concerned, instructed a surveyor to draw up a report on the boundaries. The surveyor suggested that the boundary along bridleway 58 should be about three meters in from the existing fence but the other two boundaries he didn't feel were significantly out from those shown in the owner's trust deeds. After a request by Alan Morley that the boundary should be marked, three of the committee went into the woods and marked out the position of the Village Green following the line of the old post and wire fence evidence of which was still present on the trees and some from photographs that we had taken. The owner of the Land agreed with this position and within a short time he had moved the whole fence back to the position of the old fence. This old post and wire fence we believe was present at the time the Village Green was registered and this represented a very satisfactory outcome.

Sue Speakman proposed and John Rostron seconded that we accept the current position of this fence. Members agreed, with none against, and with one abstention. (Melvyn Westlake wished to inspect the fence before committing himself.)

Accepted

The other major event that we have seen recently is the reply to the appeal against the enforcement order served on the owners of the plot at 455 London Road. Their appeal against the enforcement order was rejected and they were obliged to move their eastern boundary back into the position shown in their deeds and release that area again to the Village Green. However, a small piece of their fencing at the northern end consisting of about four panels two feet away from their boundary, which is marked by a chain link fence, has been left standing. This was pointed out to the local enforcement officer of Castle Point and they replied saying that they felt sufficient had been done to satisfy them and the piece of fencing still left standing was not a serious issue for which they wanted to instruct their legal department and they were going to close this case which they have done. The committee now have to decide whether they want to go further with this issue which would mean instructing a solicitor and going to court or perhaps involving the Open Spaces Society and a solicitor from them. This is an issue which the committee will have to resolve as soon as they can meet.

Committee

Gwyn finished by saying that the committee needs strengthening and that it would be good to have a new Chairman and perhaps some younger people to lead us in to the future.

Arising from the Chairman's report on the property alongside the A13, Estelle Westlake suggested that we should write to the Council stating that "We accept your conclusion, but we want it to go on record that we are opposed to it."

Melvyn Westlake stated that we should go and see them and if they refuse to move the fence then we should prosecute.

Eileen Peck felt that by not acting on the issue of the small outstanding infringement at 455 we could provide an unhelpful precedent and encourage encroachment.

The new committee will be obliged to consider these proposals.

Committee

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Signed..... (Chair)

..... (Date)

[2023].04 Treasurer

The Treasurer, Terry Isherwood had sent a report:

The problems with the dual authorisation for internet banking payments from the Barclays Friends of Coombewood community business account have been resolved. Cheques drawn on the account require two signatories and payments made by internet banking require dual authorisation. The treasurer had created a personal ring fenced account to enable FoC to continue to operate. Accordingly, the monies in the treasure's ring fenced account, £791.72, were transferred to the FoC account on 27th Oct 2023. Since then any funds paid into the ring-fenced account have been transferred to the FoC account and FoC is running on the FoC account

As of 31st October, 2023 the FoC account had £1 271.05.

As of 31 Dec 2023, the FoC account had £1 072.55.

Major cost in 2023 was £1200 to the surveyor for the boundary report and £38 for the hire of the hall for the EGM. We have paid £228.50 on 21 Dec 2023 for the hire of the hall for the AGM, which includes the required refundable deposit of £200.

The cost of newsletter printing was one in Jan 2023 and one in Dec 2023, both at £42 each. Paid for in 2024.

As of 13/01/2024, the FoC account has £ 1 068.55 and there are 19 members who have paid subs for 2024. Some were paid in 2023.

Sue Speakman proposed that the Treasurer's report be accepted, seconded by Melvyn Westlake. This was carried without dissent. **Accepted**

Terry has stated that he is willing to continue as Treasurer.

[2023].05 Election of Officers and Committee

The current Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are willing to continue. Estelle Westlake proposed that they all be re-elected, seconded by Sue Speakman. This was carried without dissent. **Accepted**

The current committee comprises Sue Speakman, Eileen Peck and Michael Dearson. The chair invited any other member to offer themselves for the committee and Melvyn Westlake volunteered. The Chair proposed that these four be elected to the committee. This was carried without dissent. **Accepted**

[2023].06 Publicity

Eileen Peck suggested that we should try to recruit experienced people onto the committee for co-option. We should also try to recruit members to workparties when necessary.

Eileen noted that SEEVIC/USP students had been using the wood for study purposes. The committee will certainly look into involving them further. **Committee**

[2023].07 Constitution

John Rostron had re-drafted the constitution. This was mainly to tighten up certain items and to allow us to use any Bank of our choice.

Sue Speakman proposed and Melvyn Westlake seconded that this constitution be accepted. Agreed with one against. **Accepted**

[2023].08 Questions from the floor / Any Other Business

Members asked about the removal of trees fallen across the path or causing a danger. The chairman replied that we are limited in what we can do because of the lack of information on ownership. However, we would be able to remove dangerous trees or those blocking a path. We do have at least one member licenced to use a chain saw. Ian Finlayson said he also knew a licenced user who may do some work for us.

A member from the floor asked if we were comfortable with what we have. What is our attitude to trailbikes and motorbikes? We need to keep an eye out

The meeting finished at 8.45 pm