



FRIENDS OF GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN

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Registered Charity No. 1141915

FRIENDS OF THE GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING 2018

Following on from the AGM of the Friends of the Garden in May, and subsequent meeting of both the Friends Committee and the new Liaison Committee set up between the Friends and the Parish Council, we are now in a position to update you.

The Extraordinary General Meeting of the Friends of Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden will be held on **Wednesday 19 September at 7pm at the Independent Methodist Church, Knutsford Road, Grappenhall.** We hope that you will be able to attend. We will be serving hot drinks and biscuits after the meeting.

On the following page is an update to the members on the discussions that have happened over the summer.

Also, if you were due to receive your membership renewal from March onwards, these will be sent out after the EGM pending the decisions reached at the meeting.

We look forward to seeing you on September 19th. If you attend the meeting, please park considerately; however, please do not park on the side street to the left of the church – Barton Avenue.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Weston

Chairman

Friends of Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

Feedback to EGM from meeting with Parish Council on Mon 2 July 2018:

At the AGM:

“There was a proposal from the floor that a decision on this should be delayed for 3 months, to allow a forum (outside the Estates Committee) to be set up with the PC, with an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) being held in 3 months’ time. This was put to the vote and carried by a large majority, with 1 person voting against. (Action AGM18/1 – Committee) “

The AGM offered no guidance to the Executive Committee on how they might clear this action.

We decided that the chair should approach the PC with a proposal that three members of the Friends' Exec. Committee, Erin Dawber, Nina Kingston and the chair, meet with three members of the PC.

The PC agreed to this proposal and we met with councillors Louise Fernyhough, Cliff Taylor and Sally Chisholm on Monday 2 July. Kath Brown also attended, to take a note for the record.

In order to prepare for the meeting, the whole of the Friends' Exec. Committee then had a discussion, conducted mostly via email on how to approach it.

Five days before the meeting, we sent the PC a note in which we suggested that it might be helpful if the PC could confirm the following:

- The finances of the garden are completely separate from those of the PC.
- Now that the restoration project has been closed out and all funding from the HLF has been received, the Outreach Officer is self-funding.
- Any income that accrues from leasing of the kitchen and Fountain Room is used to cover operating costs and that any surplus is set aside against the need for future capital expenditure. Such funds are used for no other purpose.
- The boundary of Ape Bars area of responsibility.

We also asked:

Does the PC consider that the objects of the Friends as set out in our constitution, and the list of suggested activities that was drawn up when the Friends were first formed, are still relevant or that they ought to be changed?

In the event that the EGM decides that the Friends' will continue, what proposals does the PC have to manage its relationship with the Friends?

The councillors opened proceedings with a description of the PC's management structure for its estates (which comprise not only the walled garden), how the estates came into the PC's ownership and how they are funded. We were informed that:

- The operating costs are covered by investment income from capital sums that were given at the time when the estates came into the PC's ownership.
- The finances of the estates are separate from those of the PC.
- The garden was handed over to the PC on condition that it would be open to the public free of charge and its purpose was educational.
- The HLF grant for glasshouse refurbishment included funding for an outreach officer. Now that all of the HLF funds have been committed, the outreach officer is effectively self-funded.
- The area rented to the cafe operator includes the Fountain Room, kitchen and wooden benches outside the Fountain Room. Additional tables and chairs may be set out on the path outside the fountain room up to the inner edges of the access paths to the back yard, so that these paths are not obstructed. This has been clarified recently because the additional tables and chairs had been interfering with gardening operations.
- The rent paid by the cafe operator covers the PC's operating costs, which are mostly business rates and utility bills.

We then stated that, following discussions that took place up to the morning of the meeting, we felt that, whilst the issue of the produce stall has brought matters to a head, the real issue is the council's vision for the garden's future.

When the council took over, its vision was that the garden should be maintained as a haven of peace and tranquillity and managed in way that respects its past. The Friends' organisation was formed by people who shared that vision.

When the restoration project was at the design stage, what is now the Fountain Room was designated as community space. The kitchen was included in order to provide light refreshments; it was not designed to support the commercial operation that has evolved and which appears to be popular with many visitors who appear to have little or no interest in the garden itself.

The council manages the garden on behalf of the whole community and not just the Friends, therefore it must decide how to balance the priorities of the cafe and the garden. It is reasonable that the renters of the kitchen and Fountain Room wish to develop their business, but it appears that their operation sometimes inhibits work in the garden; anyone who visits the garden regularly can see that when the cafe is busy the atmosphere changes.

So, what is the council's vision for the garden? If it wishes to preserve the tranquillity and horticultural value of the garden, it may be necessary to place a limit on the commercial development of the cafe. If, on the other hand, it decides to prioritise commercial development, then it is hard to see the point of the Friends' organisation as we know it.

The councillors' response was that their vision was, in fact, to limit the cafe opening time to three days per week and set its operational boundary as described above.

They also stated that, whilst the garden is a small part of the PC's responsibilities, they valued the Friends' organisation whose focus is solely the garden, and which, they felt, could support the outreach officer in maintaining public interest in its horticultural value.

It was agreed that, if the membership decide that the Friends' organisation should continue, a liaison group be set up, comprising the people at the meeting of 2 July, to meet two or three times a year. The opening agenda should be a review of the Friends' activities.

The Executive Committee recommends that the Friends vote to continue.

Extraordinary General Meeting

Wednesday 19 September 2018

A G E N D A

1. **Welcome**
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Discussion on the update from the Liaison Committee**
4. **The future of the Friends**
5. **Any Other Business**
6. **Close of Meeting**