

Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Friends of Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden held at the Independent Methodist Church, Grappenhall, on Wednesday 19 Sep 2018

Present: Members from 23 households, including the following committee members: Geoff Weston (Chairman), Kath Brown (Secretary), Ian Fountain, Nina Kingston, Jane Coumbarides and Ray Howarth.

1. Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Ruth Brown, Anne Ongley, Erin Dawber, Beryl Williams, Jane Standing, Christine Hodgkinson, Jean Heath, Kath Carey, Marjorie Maddock, Reg Brocklehurst, Lynda Ralphson

3. Discussion on the update from the Liaison Committee

The Chairman stated that this extraordinary general meeting (EGM) was being held following an action from the AGM in May: to establish a forum with the Parish Council (PC) before a decision was taken on whether the Friends should continue in existence or not. A meeting had been held between 3 members of the committee (and the secretary, as note-taker) and 3 parish councillors in July, and a note of the discussions had been circulated prior to the EGM. This group will form the 'liaison committee' if the decision is taken that the Friends should continue. The Chairman asked if there were any questions or comments arising from the note. The points raised and responses from the Chairman and other committee members, included those summarised below:

- What is the Friends for? – *this will be decided by the liaison group if we continue*
- Will there be events in future? – *yes, if we continue*
- What is happening with the produce? – *this is being sold on an 'honesty box' basis, with the money raised being banked by the Friends. The income has been considerably less than last year.*
- Are the tables still for use only by those using the café? – *yes, for those tables in the Fountain Room and those immediately outside the glasshouses. The picnic tables away from the café and tables in the green gazebo are available for anyone to use.*

Concerns were also raised about whether the PC supported the continuing existence of the Friends, and whether it was serious about the Friends continuing to support the garden as there had been no expression of remorse or regret, or any apology given. Parish councillor Cliff Taylor (attending as a member) volunteered to respond on behalf of the PC. He indicated that:

- the PC supported the statement in the note of the liaison meeting that '... 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'
- he could confirm that the green gazebo was for use by any visitor to the garden
- the PC is anxious to have the active support of the Friends group – fund-raising is not a priority as the garden is not in financial difficulties, it is more a matter of having a broad base of support
- he regrets the difficulties that there have been, but believes that holding the initial liaison meeting demonstrates the PC's support and desire for the Friends to carry on

Another matter of general concern was the interaction with the café, particularly when the Friends were holding an event. The Chairman responded that the new liaison group will provide a means to iron out issues, but we will need to look carefully at how larger events are planned and organised, and try to have a dialogue with the café staff – they might be invited to the liaison group from time to time.

4. The future of the Friends

On conclusion of the above discussion, Eileen Bennicke, seconded by Hugh Kingston, proposed that the Friends should continue. The proposal was **carried** with 16 votes in favour, 2 against and 5 abstentions.

5. Any other business

Membership: Jane Coumbarides (membership secretary) stated that she had been holding back on sending out renewals, pending the decision on the future of the Friends. She will now send these out, and future renewals will fall due in October.

Expenditure: Geoff gave a brief update on recent income and expenditure: we have paid half the cost of refurbishing the green gazebo (£1750); we will be paying for new carvings from the cedar tree that had to be cut down; we have committed £500 for new tools which Graham Richardson is spending on an *ad hoc* basis; we expect to receive £250 from Stockton Heath festival.

Liaison group – Hugh Kingston asked whether people would be able to offer ideas for discussion at future liaison meetings, eg, some of the issues raised at this meeting. Geoff responded positively and said that anybody who had any suggestions should get in touch with a member of the committee.

6. Close

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.