

FRIENDS OF COOMBE WOOD



Chairman Gwyn Jordan

Treasurer T. Isherwood

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 Tuesday October 12th at 7.00pm at St George's Small Hall, Thundersley

Present

Terry Isherwood, John Rostron, Gwyn Jordan, Peter Hughes, Alan Morley, Margaret Rostron, Doreen Jordan, Neil Hayday, Margaret Hayday, John Cerny.

[2021].01 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman, Gwyn Jordan, welcomed members to this AGM. Sue Speakman, Beryl Hayes, Eileen Peck, Melvyn Westlake and Dave Brown had sent apologies.

[2021].02 Minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting on 28th November 2016

Alan Morley asked that the minutes should be amended to record that he had stepped down from the committee in 2007 for legal reasons to allow a second Village Green application to be pursued and thereafter was co-opted under rule 8 as and when required, Given this amendment, the minutes were accepted as correct, proposed by Peter Hughes, seconded by Alan Morley. **Accepted**

[2021].03 Matters Arising

From 02 (Boundary Markers): The Council had put down Boundary Markers. Alan Morley reported that Mark Evans claimed to have knocked these markers down to below ground level.

The Chairman reported that the boundaries around Cartref were not clear and were open onto the Village Green.

From 06.04 (Open Spaces Society): The Chairman commented that there had not been any matters for which this would apply, but the advice provided would inform our future discussions.

[2021].04 Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting on 19th September 2019

These were accepted as correct, proposed by Margaret Rostron, Seconded by Peter Hughes. **Accepted**

[2021].05 Matters Arising

From 04 (The Continuation of the Friends of Coombe Wood): This needed to be ratified by the current AGM. John Rostron proposed this endorsement and Alan Moreley seconded. The meeting endorsed the proposal unanimously. **Agreed**

[2021].06 Chairman’s Report

Gwyn Jordan commented that lockdown has hindered our dealings with the Council. We have not been able to arrange any meetings with members or officers on the ground. It could also have affected the numbers attending this AGM.

He and others had noticed an increase in the number of people using the wood during lockdown. Some local people were even disappointed that so many were using it! There has been some vandalism of the leaflet dispensers and of the Notice Board by the Churchyard. The posts had been broken off at the base, breaking the concrete. This has been repaired by adding supports and repairing the concrete. He suggested that we leave the leaflet dispensers for the moment.

The maps on the notice boards have proved valuable in asserting our boundaries.

Two bridges have been placed over streams or gullies in the wood. These are nothing to do with Friends of Coombe Wood, and we take no responsibility for them. The one near the western stream, over the side stream, is very useful and sufficiently wide and sturdy to cross easily. The one near the Coombewood Drive entrance is sturdy but narrow, too narrow for older people to cross with comfort.

[2021].07 Treasurer

Treasurer’s Narrative

Terry Isherwood has tabled a report summarising financial activity since the last AGM up to the present. At the beginning of 2021, the previous Treasurer, Terry Tokeley had retired through ill health. Terry Isherwood had taken on this role until such time as a new treasurer could be found. The new treasurer was not on the signatories for the existing bank account (Friends of Coombe Wood Community Account), so Terry T transferred the bulk of the Friend’s balance (£2000) to Terry I who opened a new, ring-fenced, account under his name to allow us to receive and spend money. Since then, Terry T has died and the old bank account has been frozen by the bank. Terry Isherwood has been trying to find out from the bank (Barclays Bank, Rayleigh branch) the procedure for resolving this, without any success. There was only £12.22 left in the old account.

People have continued to make cheques payable to the old account, which the treasurer has been able to pay in. These comprised £60 in subscriptions and £116 in donations. |The old account now stands at £188.22.

For the new account, £145 has been paid in as subscriptions and £210 as donations. There has been expenditure of £247.28 for newsletters, flyers and extra plastic boxes for flyers on the notice boards. There is also £10 to pay out, giving a total of £2097.22 in the new account.

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

[2021].08 Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

The Secretary had provided copies of the current (2012) Constitution and a revised version. He explained that the changes were effectively to bring the Constitution in line with reality. There were three further amendments from the floor as follows:

Item **3.4** amended to: “To maintain a record of the wood’s boundaries, ownership and contents (vegetation, forestry and wildlife).”

Item 3.7 amended to: “Challenge any claim on the woods either directly or indirectly which could be detrimental to these objectives.”

Item 9 the penultimate sentence be amended to: “The Treasurer shall provide a financial report and accounts.”

With these amendments, the revised Constitution was agreed. Proposed by Alan Morley, Seconded by Terry Isherwood. **Agreed**

[2021].09 Report on Enforcement Notices

Alan Morley reported:

Two site meetings to inspect the encroachment on the woods were made:

The first with the local Councillor and the Leader of the Council.

The second with Officers of the Council who were given a folder of evidence showing encroachment. The officers took their own photos and measurements on site.

Enforcement notice process has been initiated in two cases. One for 445 London Road in violation of Article 4 Direction and a second for land enclosed by 3 bridleways. For the second it is not clear whether notice is for Article 4 Direction or for lack of planning permission in respect to keeping horses on the land. It could be for both. The Council has confirmed in writing that the fencing is unauthorised anyway since it was done after planning permission had expired.

Should the Council fail to take action to enforce their own regulations there is the option to prosecute the owners over encroachment of the Village Green. The owners should be aware of the two legal processes that could follow and as such it was agreed that verbal and or written communication from FOC should be made to the owners to persuade them to comply with the initial approaches made by the Council to them. There should be no recognition by FOC that 445 London Road has any legal entitlement to any land other than what is on their Title Deed.

Alan will work out the different ways how we go forward on this for the committee to consider within the next week or so.

[2021].10 Newsletters

The Newsletter Editor, John Rostron invited comment from the floor on the recent newsletters. The feeling from the floor was very positive and encouraging. Terry Isherwood commented that receiving a newsletter helped remind members to renew their subscriptions. Members agreed that we should find ways to encourage members to pay by Direct Debit or Standing Orders. The new committee will explore this.

[2021].11 Election of Officers and Committee

The existing committee are all willing to continue. These include the Chairman, Gwyn Jordan, The Secretary, John Rostron, the interim Treasurer, Terry Isherwood and Sue Speakman. Alan Morley, a previous committee member was willing to join the committee as was Peter Hughes. The meeting agreed that the current officers and members would continue in their current roles for the interim. The membership as given here was proposed by Terry Isherwood and seconded by John Rostron. **Agreed**

[2021].12 Matters that have arisen since the EGM

Most of the items listed here on the Agenda have been covered except item 10.4. The referred to an interest Terry Isherwood had expressed in a property with the Land Registry Title EX851445 (24/05/2010). Terry explained that he thought that the interest had been rescinded by the Land Registry as being invalid. However, Alan Morley and Gwyn Jordan said that the interest on this land was still flagged. The new committee will investigate this.

Terry Isherwood reported that the ownership of High Firs has now changed hands within the Connolly family due a member passing away.

In respect to taking ownership of Council Land Terry Isherwood reported that FoC in its present form or structure cannot take on ownership of any land legally. This is because FoC has no legal identity of its own, and as such it cannot itself form contracts, bring legal claims (or defend them) or own property. It must do so through the officers and management committee.

Also land cannot be donated to be a Village Green, the only way land can become a Village Green is by meeting the requirements and going through the registration process.

[2021].13 Questions from the floor / Any Other Business

The new committee agreed to meet formally in early March 2022 with the invitation from Peter Hughes for his home to be the venue.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm.