

# 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 Tuesday November 11<sup>th</sup> 2014, at 84 Kenneth Road.**

### **Present**

Terry Isherwood, Terry Tokeley, John Rostron, Beryl Hayes, Sue Speakman, Alan Morley, Gwyn Jordan, Peter Hughes.

### **[2014].1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

These were accepted as correct, proposed by Sue Speakman, seconded by Beryl Hayes.

**Accepted**

### **[2014].2 Matters Arising**

There were none not otherwise covered.

### **[2014].3 Chairman's Report**

First, one of our long standing committee members, Beryl Hayes, has indicated that she will be stepping down after many years' service. I would take this opportunity to thank her for all her work on your behalf over the years and to remind everyone that without the work of your committee members, past and present, we would never have achieved what we have and we could easily lost access to Coombe Wood, even worse it could have been lost to developers.

During the year we have had the occasional litter pick and I have to say that the level of litter has not been great. It seems the cleaner we keep it the cleaner it remains. The end of Lake Drive has been tidied up by the resident(s) and looks much nicer.

We have cleared the bridleways of fallen trees and branches at the request of Essex County Council and opened up the entrance to the woods at the end of Coombewood Drive. Essex appreciates our efforts and we always get an email of thanks from them.

John, our secretary, has done an excellent job in maintaining the web site and we intend to continue this.

I now have to come on to the issue of the dreaded fence at the northern end of Coombe Wood which I know most of you hate and want to see it removed. This is on our Village Green and stops us passing freely from north to south and whilst we can walk round the perimeter of the Village Green we cannot enter it. Essex County Council have asked the land owner to remove it and we have had many discussion with the land owner but all to no avail. We have even offered to help in its removal. This leaves us with no alternative but to resort to litigation, expensive though it may be, but the only way if we are to get it removed. We are currently seeking legal advice on a plan of action.

I hope our delay in going down this route will not stand against us but the courts expect every avenue of resolution to be explored before litigation. We have done more than could be reasonably expected.

## **[2014].4 Treasurer**

### **Treasurer's Narrative**

Due to the initial poor response to the membership renewal newsletter, a membership drive in the early part of 2014 resulted in the majority of the 2013 membership renewing their support. Now that both halves of Coombe Wood have Village Green Status it appears that many former members consider the job done and have not renewed, leaving us with a hard core membership of around fifty households. Items of expenditure this year include our continued membership of the Open Spaces Society, maintenance of our website and printing costs to update the current and future information boards to reflect the addition of the Northern Village Green.

The balance at the Bank detailed below may seem to be substantial in relation to our current level of expenditure, however, the outstanding problems associated with the Allen's fence will require some significant expense in the coming months. Therefore to continue to protect our hard earned rights a sizable cash reserve and the support of our membership is essential.

### **Bank Account**

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

With Beryl's pending resignation from the committee from next year it will be necessary to review the bank account signatories and approach the bank to establish a new list of authorised committee members.

### **Fiscal year 2014**

Friends of Coombe Wood fiscal year 2014, runs from 01/11/2013 to 31/10/2014.

### **Income for 2014**

Our sole source of income is from membership fees, donations and any grants for which we are extremely grateful, membership for 2014 was 53 households.

The bank balance at the start of the year was £1,422.49. Our total income for this year is £480.00, made up of £265.00 from membership subscriptions and £215.00 from donations.

### **Expenditure for 2014**

Open Spaces Society	£45.00
FOC website	£50.25
Notice Board Maps	£50.25
Total	£145.50

### **Balance at 31-10-2014**

Opening bank balance as of 1 November 2013	£1,422.49*
Income (memberships, donations and grants)	£480.00
Expenditure	£145.50
Closing bank balance as at 31/10/14	£1,756.99*

\*Actual amount in bank

## Projected expenditure for 2015

We are due to renew our membership of the Open Spaces Society although this is open for debate at the AGM. This is on direct debit, charged at £45 for 2014, but there may be an increase for 2015.

The cost to maintain our website, (Cost for 2015 to be advised by and reimbursed to the Secretary).

## Projected income for 2015

Total projected income for 2015 is estimated at approximately £500.00 based on the number and generosity of last year's membership

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. The meeting agreed to maintain this subscription.

**Agreed**

John Rostron proposed, and Alan Morley seconded, that the accounts be accepted. This was agreed unanimously.

**Agreed**

## Other matters

Members agreed that the Treasurer's report should be circulated to paid-up members with the next newsletter. Lapsed members should get a newsletter along with a request to renew their membership.

**Agreed**

We would remind existing members who may not have already renewed for 2015 that their subscriptions are now due and would ask them to complete the renewal form attached and return it to a member of the committee.

The treasurer asked that, if anyone knew of anyone else who would like to become a member and help us preserve Coombe Wood and improve the habitat, then they should pass on their details to any member of the committee so that we can get in touch with them.

As far as we know, we are not eligible to claim Gift Aid. The Treasurer will check on this.

## [2014].5 Election of Officers and Committee

Of the existing committee, the Chair, Terry Isherwood, the Treasurer, Terry Tokeley, the Secretary, John Rostron, and two committee members, Sue Speakman and Alan Morley, are all willing to continue.

Beryl Hayes, a long-standing committee member is standing down. No other members wished to join the committee. The meeting agreed that these would continue in their current roles.

**Agreed**

## [2014].6 Aims, Objectives and Strategies for 2014

- 6.01** The Treasurer, Terry Tokeley will contact the Charities Commissioners to see if we qualify to claim Gift Aid. **Action: Terry Tokeley**
- 6.02** Members agreed to have four signatories, with any two able to sign and countersign a cheque. These would be Terry Isherwood, Terry Tokeley, John Rostron and Sue Speakman. Terry Isherwood will contact the bank to arrange this. **Action: Terry Isherwood**
- 6.03** Terry Isherwood will contact Castle Point Borough Council to ask them to place markers on their boundaries on those parts of the Village Green that they own. **Action: Terry Isherwood**

**6.04** We should all aim to recruit new members and encourage lapsed members to re-join. The Treasurer will provide committee members with a list, colour-coded for each committee member so they can contact people. **Action: Terry Tokeley, All Committee**

**6.05** We should add Corporate Membership to our constitution, and aim to recruit local businesses and organizations. The suggested subscription would be £5 with donations encouraged. **Agreed**

We will compile a recruitment leaflet for use with potential corporate members. **Action: John Rostron, Terry Tokeley**

**6.06** We should contact Kingston School (the only School in the Neighbourhood) to ask if they would like us to organize walks in the wood for the pupils. Such walks would be accompanied by staff or parents and would be unlikely to need DBS checking. **Action: Gwyn Jordan**

**6.07** Our principal aim for the year will be the removal of the fence around the northern part of the Village green. Since the establishment of the Village Green, and a letter from Essex County Council requiring Roger Allen to remove the fence, there have been two developments:

- Roger Allen has removed a section of the fence along his southern boundary, allowing access from the wood near the top of the stream.
- Roger Allen has stated that he has gifted the northern fence to St Peter's Church, and the Church PCC are said to have accepted it. However we have seen no written evidence of this transaction.

During the period we have been in informal contact with the Church and the Allens urging them to remove the fence, to no avail.

Our immediate objective will be to Lay an Information before a Local Magistrate stating that the Allens have failed to follow the requirement to remove the fence. We are currently compiling a timeline, with appropriate documents which will support this application. We aim to show this to the Allens, prior to Laying the Information, with the hope that they will recognize the strength of our case and comply.

Our Information is currently being compiled by Alan Morley, but he will now be assisted by Sue Speakman and Peter Hughes. **Action: Alan Morley, Sue Speakman, Peter Hughes**

## **[2014].7 Any Other Business**

There was none.

The meeting finished at 9.50pm.