



The Friends of Old Headington

Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Friday, 12 May 2017 at the Village Hall

Present: Lady (Nancy) Kenny (President), Dr Sonia Brough (Vice-President), and 60 members and friends.

Peter McCarter (Chairman) welcomed members and friends and chaired the meeting, with Howard Stanbury (Secretary) assisting.

- 1. Apologies for absence:* received from Brian Aldiss, Jinny Blom, Ellan Derow, Anthony and Celia de Vere, Vicky Haeri, Claire Harvey, Peggy Howarth, Clive Hurst, Yvonne Jehenson and Peter Dunn, Bernadette Lavery, Julian and Carmelina Lawton Smith, Karin Osborne, Nell Slocock, Nelly Stanbury, and Joe & Lowell Winkelman. City Councillor Ruth Wilkinson also sent her apologies.
- 2. Veronica Hurst*
The President, Nancy Kenny, paid tribute to the contribution to the Friends made by Veronica Hurst, whose untimely death on 14 January 2017 had robbed us of one who had brought a great deal of energy and commitment to the organisation, helping to mobilise opinion and represent the Friends on local bodies. Among Veronica's achievements was the work done in helping steer the Headington Neighbourhood Plan through to completion and the subsequent approval of the Plan gave recognition to her efforts to make the local community a better place. The death was also noted of Penny Richards in 2016 – she was a founding member of the Friends, Chairman, and past President. Among Veronica's achievements was the work done in helping steer the Headington Neighbourhood Plan through to completion and the subsequent approval of the Plan gave recognition to her efforts to make the local community a better place.
- 3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 13 May 2016*
After two minor corrections were noted, the adoption of the draft minutes was proposed by Innes King and seconded by Diana Tickell, and were unanimously approved by the meeting.
- 4. Matters arising from the Minutes*
There were no matters arising from the minutes, the Chairman having asked members to raise only urgent matters, or those not otherwise on the agenda.
- 5. Treasurer's Report*
The new Treasurer, Hugh Ferris, introduced himself and presented the accounts for 2016.

A surplus of £1,713 was reported (£904 in 2015). Income was up 8% at £2,304, with annual subscriptions amounting to £960. This reflected an increase in membership following a recruitment effort during the year. Open Gardens raised £1,174, about the same as 2015. Expenditure (£591) was less than half that for 2015.

The balance sheet indicated that our current assets and reserves totalled £14,647 on 31/12/2016, up from £12,934 in the previous year.

In response to an inquiry about whether the Friends were members of the Oxford Preservation Trust, Howard Stanbury said he would make inquiries and Stella Welford offered to help.

6. *Adoption of the Annual Accounts for 2016*

The accounts were adopted (proposed Jim Malcolmson, seconded by John Rowling) unanimously.

7. *Appointment of independent examiner of the accounts*

The Treasurer thanked Adrian Williams for his examination of the accounts. The Chairman proposed that he be appointed for 2017. This was seconded by Innes King and approved *nem. con.*

8. *Chairman's Report*

The Chairman began by reminding members of the purpose and mission of the Friends as expressed in our constitution:

... to preserve the rural amenities and village charm of Old Headington and to seek to prevent the village succumbing to urban pressures. ... [To] work actively to encourage and foster the preservation of the character of the village. At the same time, acknowledging that change is ever with us, ... seek to ensure, when change is being considered, that if made, it is effected only in a sympathetic fashion ...

Membership in 2016 stood at 230 members including 44 life members. He urged members to use standing orders to facilitate payment of membership: 125 currently do so.

The trustees regretted the loss in the past year of members. In addition to Veronica Hurst and Penny Richards, mentioned by Nancy Kenny, others included Wattie Fletcher, Penny Glaspole, Very Revd Bob Jeffrey (Life Member), Judith Lea and Sue Shaw.

Open Gardens

We were pleased to welcome the Lord Mayor, Councillor Altaf Khan, to Open Gardens on 26 June. The event raised £1,383, or £1,174 net after expenses. The Chairman thanked Jenny Butler for organising the event; the gardeners who shared their gardens with us; Alison Soskice and colleagues in the growing group for their work in preparing a successful plant sales stand; and Marilyn North and the ladies of Otmoor WI for their teas and cakes in the Village Hall.

Winter Meeting

We were pleased to hold this again on Friday 18 November at Ruskin College. The guest speaker was the eminent landscape architect Hal Moggridge and he spoke on Capability Brown at Blenheim. (Mr Moggridge was the landscape consultant for the planting at Blenheim Palace, 1981-1999.)

Planning matters

The *Headington Neighbourhood Plan* - the result of three years' work by members of the Headington Neighbourhood Forum (a groups of more than 100 members of the local community including elected members of Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils) - was approved by referendum on 4 May by 3,310 votes in favour to 543 against.

[Subsequent to this AGM, at a full meeting of Oxford City Council on Thursday 20th July 2017 the Council resolved that the Headington Neighbourhood Plan be 'made'.]

29 Old High Street

Unfortunately, Councillor Ruth Wilkinson was unable to attend this meeting and so an update on the current state of play could not be presented. [This long-running saga resumed later in the year when the owner presented a new application to re-develop the site. This has been rejected by the city council because of the excessive size and bulk of the proposed extensions and the proximity to the boundary of the site with a neighbouring house.]

The meeting was updated on developments at *Barton Park* – work had started on the first phase of homes, the so-called Mosaics development at the western end of the site. Traffic-light controlled access to Barton Park would be introduced later in the year with access to Northway limited to buses, emergency vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

The Chairman raised the question of *threats* to the Conservation Area. The *Oxford Spatial Options Assessment* by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of the Oxfordshire Growth Board had identified 'land north of Old Headington' (green field sites from Ruskin Fields in the west to the OPT field to the east) that might support 550 dwellings by 2031. There are proposals that the Wick Farm site in the Green Belt north of Barton might support developments of over 2,200 houses. We should remain vigilant to these and other threats to the Conservation Area.

The question of seeking Article 4 Direction for the Conservation Area had been discussed and reviewed by the trustees. The history of the issue was reviewed and in the past year had been raised with the city planners. The city remains ambivalent towards the idea and has expressed the view that their priorities are elsewhere at the moment. Not all Conservation Areas in the city have character appraisals at the moment and a handful enjoy Article 4 direction. It was the trustees' view that we should wait perhaps 24 months before revisiting the question and that we could perhaps join with others to make progress. [The option was raised in the trustees' response to the city's Local Plan Preferred Options consultation later in the year.]

The Chairman concluded by thanking the trustees for their support and commitment throughout the year. We were grateful to John Rawson for his sage advice on planning

applications, and to others who had given us advice from time to time. Finally, warm appreciation was expressed to Robert Grimley for his role as Acting Chairman, especially during the time of Veronica Hurst's illness and afterwards.

The President thanked the Chairman for his report and expressed her own thanks to him and the Secretary for their hard work in the previous year.

9. *Enhancement Award 2017*

We were fortunate this year to have more than one nomination, a reflection perhaps of the interest in the built environment in the Conservation Area and also the fact that residents and others who take on these tasks strongly respect the history and the setting they are working in. We are fortunate to be able to make a choice when we decide who the recipients should be.

The trustees decided there would be just one recipient of the Enhancement Award this year, and we were delighted to announce that the winners for 2017 are

Rachel Croft and James Scott Brown for the extension at 94 Old High Street facing on to St Andrew's Road.

The nomination for the award summed up the qualities of the project:

'In my view this is a successful extension project, which converts an awkward living space into a pleasant home.

The original stone/brick building fronts Old High Street and St Andrews Road at a central part of the conservation area. The St Andrews end was messy, having been adapted from Mrs Bond's shop.

Any acceptable conversion would have to be sympathetic to the neighbouring buildings; this I feel has been considered and deserves recognition. The size of the extension; the choice of building materials; the attention to matching brick work and suitable windows all achieve a welcome outcome and enhancement of the conservation area.'

The Chairman offered congratulations to the winners, and presented a framed award to James.

10. *Election of Committee Members*

Four nominations had been received by the deadline of 8 p.m. on 5 May, all of whom were current trustees; three, having come to the end of their terms of office, were willing to be re-elected and one co-opted trustee was now seeking election. The following were duly elected en bloc:

Jinny Blom (Proposer David Cartwright, Seconder Julie Harrod)
Hugh Ferris (Proposer Howard Stanbury, Seconder Robert Grimley)
Julie Harrod (Proposer Robert Grimley, Seconder John Clarke)
Howard Stanbury (Proposer Jinny Blom, Seconder Peter McCarter)

11. Any other business

Matters raised included:

1. Marian Brown pointed out that the pavement running from Emden House towards the centre of the village, on the north side of Barton Lane had an adverse camber which made it difficult for less-able users to use. [Subsequent to the meeting the city council repaired this path.]
2. Tony Kenny encouraged the trustees to promote bee-friendly initiatives in gardens and open spaces in the village, perhaps through the use of an annual award for the most bee-friendly space. The difficulty of judging such an award was pointed out, and it was also stated that the PCC was encouraging a wild part of the churchyard, and this might be co-opted to use bee-friendly species.
3. Peter Shaw inquired what plans there were for the assets of the Friends. This is a topic under discussion by the trustees but an immediate need had been identified to move reserve funds into more productive savings and investment accounts, and a general principle had been agreed for enacting this.
4. John Tiffany remarked that the volume of traffic in the centre of the village is getting worse. Results of recent initiatives by the Friends to review traffic were summarised, and the matter remains under review.
5. Innes King remarked that ambulances seem to be using the Osler Road entrance to the JR Hospital, resulting in difficulties in Osler Road itself.
6. Julie Harrod suggested that initiatives might be taken to allow increased movement of hedgehogs between gardens through the creation of tunnels or holes between gardens.

There being no other business, the formal part of the meeting closed, and members enjoyed refreshments and informal discussion.