

FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS
14TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
10th June 2023

1. **Welcome:** Hugh welcomed the attendees and thanked them for coming to our 14th AGM held in the park.

Introduction of committee and attendees: Hugh Daglish the Chairman, Treasurer Liz Bennett; Secretary Gary Ellison; Membership Sec Diana Pasterfield; and members, Val Daglish, Ron King and Andrew Pasterfield.

2. **Apologies:** No apologies received
3. **Minutes of last AGM** were approved Actions arising were:

- a. Attract more Friends – Committee - ongoing
- b. Chairman to thank the Gardeners and write to Parks department to express concern over yet further reduction in their numbers and about the May 'No Mow' policy – done.

AGM minutes were proposed for acceptance and approved.

4. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman restated the principle aim is to recruit as many Friends as we could, in order to demonstrate the value that local people place on Victoria Gardens, and in the belief that a Friends Group helps to protect the gardens and steer their fate.

The general principle for the committee's actions is that the Gardens are a small, sheltered and peaceful place where priority is given to the bowlers, very young children with their parents and those who like to sit quietly. This does not exclude other activities but defines the Friends' emphasis for everyday use.

Committee met in July, October and after this AGM.

- a. After many successful years our "adopt a bed scheme" has faltered in the last two with more bed keepers having to give up. However, to our delight West Kirby in Bloom volunteers have come several times and worked wonders on the beds. They also worked very hard on the central bed to clear it so that ivy and bramble could be uprooted.

The flower beds are a very important part of the park's attraction. We still want all to be in the hands of local people who bring their individual ideas to the planting. We make up to £50 a year available per bed for the cost of plants with an initial adopter's allowance of £100.

Action: Committee – Val - to engage contractor for additional heavy work gardening.

We were not intending to run a Neighbourhood picnic this year, again due to lack of people to run it, unless volunteers are forthcoming. It was suggested

that a simpler event similar to that organized for the Coronation be considered.

Action: Committee to review something like the coronation event.

- b. We have continued the general clear up on the first Saturday of every month between 10am and 11am at which all are welcome to help.
- c. We consulted Martin Harrison (Ashton Gardens), Peter Ryan (Coronation Gardens) and Jane Kennedy (Sandlea Park).
- d. The Secretary maintains the website which shows commitment as well as being informative. This has been running since 2010.
- e. We enjoy a close relationship with the local Parks Department officers who have generally responded well to maintenance points, though this remains less so than in earlier times with further cuts to staff. We would like to thank the gardeners who do as good a job as they can, with much reduced numbers, on lawns, ivy, hedges, and take away our waste from the clear ups. The AGM supported thanking the gardeners and writing to the Parks Department to voice concern at their low numbers - Approved.

Action: Chairman

- f. We have an annual meeting in the park with officers to run through our suggestions. Lately our main concerns are:
 - a. Trip hazard from weed in the paths caused by Council decision to ban use of weed killer in the parks (but not the highways) – they are said to be considering using vinegar but no action to date.
 - b. Length of grass on the East lawn due to Council 'No Mow May' ostensibly to attract insects, but which obscures dog faeces and broken glass from vandals getting into it and makes that lawn unusable for play. This was very bad last year as there had been no mowing at all before May. We therefore had the lawn mown ourselves which displeased the higher Parks management very much but we asserted we had no choice and observed that No Mow May exceptions are clearly made in some other parks – why not here? A discussion with the senior parks managers produced a promise to mow before May and to mow a pattern leaving some, rather than all, to grow untouched during May. The bowling green has been well tended throughout.
 - c. Making good damage caused by vandals particularly to the lavatory door which now has a metal grill.
- g. The park was awarded the Green Flag in July 2014, and again in each subsequent year. We are not sure that it is really deserved now and that it allows the Council to think their cuts don't matter. This year the result of the short notice inspection was another award. The Green Flag is a recognition that the park is serving the community well. In the past for us, this was a means of getting improvements to the park made by the Council which might not otherwise have happened: paving re-laid (removing trip hazards), the bowlers' lavatories and our notice board replaced when it was damaged by storms; a large welcome sign on the corner of South Parade, masonry repaired, bowling green boards replaced and painted, pavilion roof, floor and doors replaced. The award also recognizes the work done by the Friends - money, gifts, time and concern for the Gardens' upkeep and use. The Green Flag is prized by the Council and we hope this means they are less likely to

think of alternative uses for the land. The inspectors returning every year to check that Victoria Gardens are still worthy of the Green Flag should keep everyone on their toes, but they need to fail us next time!

- h. In June 2019 the Council accepted our nomination of Victoria Gardens as an 'Asset of Community Value' under the Localism Act 2011. This means that the owners (the Council) cannot dispose of the land without meeting some conditions laid out in the Act and the Council will apply for a restriction to be registered on its Land Registry title. This would not be a block to changing the use of the land but would be a hoop that developers would have to negotiate and perhaps an impediment – so worth having. This lasts for 5 years after which it may be renewed, which needs to be done next year.

Action: Chairman

- i. Gatherings of teenagers still occur – but malevolence or destruction have been less frequent than in the past due to police action.
- j. We remain part of a 'WhatsApp' group of more than 80 local residents, effectively a 'neighbourhood watch' which has been very successful in spotting bad behavior and reporting it to the police, resulting in much police response, dispersal orders over holidays and some warnings to parents and arrests. We quickly clear up any mess and report it to the police and to the Parks Department. If you ever see any criminal damage, under-age drinking or anti-social behavior call Merseyside Police on 101 or if you have Facebook Messenger – send a message to **Merseyside Police Contact Centre** which goes straight to the operations room. If you can, email the incident number and brief description to enquiry@fvg.org.uk, so that we can log it.

5. Treasurer and Membership Sec Report.

- a. The Treasurer presented the accounts. The Committee had a good response to subscription requests last year. We very recently sent out requests for the current year.
- b. Closing account 30th April 2023

i. Brought forward from 2021-22:	£1931.55
ii. Income 2022-23:	£ 737
Subs: £265 Donations: £472 including	£150 from
Selwyn Lloyd	
Credit total	<u>£2668.55</u>
iii. Expenditure	
Donations to WKIB (£150) and NCS (£50) for Claire House	£200
Auditor Gift	£25
May Grass Cutting	£70
CCTV Contractor for repair	£85
Stationery	£18.14
Plants and gardens	£218.06
Debit total	<u>£616.20</u>
iv. Account balance -	<u>£2052.35</u>
- c. The Treasurer thanked the auditor Peter McEleavy (16/6) and proposed providing vouchers as a gift – Proposed & Approved.

- d. Future expenditure – All the major items have been completed with last of the old benches replaced, so we expect expenditure to be focused on planting and, when feasible, the Picnic.
- e. Subscriptions have been requested for this year 2023-24 – staying at £3 and £5 for a household. Some favoured increase to £4 and £8 next year.

Action: Committee to review subscription pricing.

Over our 14 years to 30 April 2023 ...

- a. £16,685 has come from the community for the gardens: £10,076 raised by the Friends and £6,609 from a legacy in 2015
- b. We have spent the money as follows:
 - i. £404 on admin - just 2.4% of expenditure
 - ii. £1970 on the picnics – donations to the bowlers, banners, bunting, insurance
 - iii. £9,344 on the gardens – 8 benches, plants, paint, camera, stump removal, plaques, keys, gardening hand tools
 - iv. to the legacy.
- c. In all, £14,633 spent on improving the gardens and amenities. The rest, £2,052 was in the bank on 30 April.
- d. Last year we achieved the pre-pandemic numbers with 100 Friends from the Community and the bowlers; and the Nursery has had honorary membership. So far 83 members have subscribed again this year. We need to attract more, any help welcomed **Action:** Committee

- 6. **Bowling Club.** We are delighted that due to Peter Ryan's terrific recruiting efforts the Bowling Club has been re-invigorated by new members and continues to use the green as we would wish. This is an important part of the Community's commitment to the park.

7. **Parks Department Update.**

- a. The Parks Department are working under further budget cuts and another reorganisation. Fortunately, we are keeping our excellent gardeners team leader, Carlo. We always say that the Council must not rely on Friends groups but manage parks properly on their own. They have been very good at this in the past but are now struggling with a yet smaller team to cover 6 parks.
- b. The bowling green has recovered somewhat from poor condition after lockdown, and the boards have been replaced. The gardeners quickly do remedial work when it is damaged.
- c. At the Ranger's request in 2021 we created a 'Risk Assessment' for volunteers working in the park which is necessary to support the Council's liability insurance. This is attached and needs to be distributed annually to all volunteers.
- d. AGM voiced considerable concern at the bin service and asked that the council be persuaded to provide a better bin collection service.

Action: Committee

8. Achievements Summary. Over the years:

- a. We have raised or been given £16,085 and spent £14,633 on the Gardens: plants, benches, tools, new kitchen, taps and annual picnics. We have had donations in kind, cakes, raffle prizes, etc from people for the picnic.
- b. People, not just the committee, have given their time – working on the flower beds, clearing up, putting on the picnics.
- c. The committee has kept a close eye, reporting dilapidation, vandalism, and damage to the authorities, and it has organised events – time spent on the gardens.
- d. Never less than 100 Friends show concern for the park's continuing wellbeing and appreciation for the amenity.

Money, gifts, time, concern - from the community - for the gardens' upkeep and use. This demonstrates a community commitment to the gardens which must help preserve and improve them. The result has been improvements to the gardens and greater use by the community.

None of these - money, gifts, time or vigilance would have happened without the Friends.

9. The future. We want to:

- a. Recruit more Friends and support the Bowling club.
- b. Hold another "Neighbourhood Picnic" aimed at local people when we can, but not this year, unless volunteers help the committee. When we do you can help by
 - i. Coming with your picnic and bringing others
 - ii. Donating a cake, or garden produce for sale
 - iii. Donating raffle prizes – the Chairman proposed to have fewer raffle prizes – children's prizes very welcome.
 - iv. **Action:** AGM attendees of the Coronation garden event requested to email the committee with event activities to use as a template going forward.
- c. Encourage adopt a bed and tidying and planting by the community.
- d. Keep in regular touch with Parks department on maintenance and improvements, and seek an annual meeting with officers to discuss maintenance priorities as shown in the new Management Plan
- e. Develop the new website for the gardens
- f. Report any misbehaviour, damage and crime

Attendees were asked to encourage others to join the Friends and to come to the next picnic. The more we have, the more we demonstrate neighbourhood commitment to the Gardens and the better we can defend them against unwelcome developments.

Action: ALL

The committee would be grateful for ideas, by note, e-mail or quiet word. If anyone would like to adopt a flowerbed, please look at the notice board for details.

10. Stand down old committee – elect new committee.

- a. The committee was stood down, offered themselves for re-election, and were re-elected.

11. AOB.

It was mentioned by attendees how lovely the park is this year.

Potentially approach public using the bowling green if they wish to be part of the friends.

Update noticeboard with QR codes for paying subs to join the Friends.

Thanks from individuals for committee's efforts.

12. Next AGM – sometime in June or July 2024 – venue to be confirmed.

The AGM was closed at 11:31

Gary Ellison
Secretary

Hugh Daglish
Chairman

Annex: Risk Assessment - Friends of Victoria Gardens

Annex – Risk Assessment – Victoria Garden Volunteers

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
<u>Working in flower beds, harm from:</u>		<u>Brief volunteers to ensure that:</u>		<u>Committee Members</u>	<u>Annually and when a new volunteer starts</u>	
Incorrect use of gardening tools	Volunteers	All are fully conversant with proper use of each tool. No use of power tools	N/A			
Poorly maintained gardening tools	Volunteers	Keeping tools oiled and those with blades sharp	N/A			
Thorns and stings	Volunteers	All made aware of the risk – wear gloves – wash hands afterwards	N/A			
Poisonous plants	Volunteers	Ditto	N/A			
Broken glass, cigarette ends and	Volunteers	Ditto	N/A			

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
drugs paraphernalia remnants						
Dog faeces	Volunteers	Ditto plus notice to dog owners on board when it is observed to have happened				
Exposure to extreme sun, heat, cold, wet	Volunteers	All made aware of the risk – wear appropriate clothes	N/A			
<u>Clearing up litter, broken bottles, drugs detritus, dog faeces and green waste</u>	Volunteers	Ensuring: all work with appropriate gloves and tools	N/A	Committee Members	Annually and when a new volunteer starts	
<u>Disposal of the above</u>	The Public	Ensure all place these materials in suitable bags and leave in or by the litter bins.	N/A	Committee Members	Annually and when a new volunteer starts	
			Provide another litter bin to	Parks Department	As soon as	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
			reduce accumulation of waste on the ground		possible	
<u>Injury from hazards above</u>	Volunteers	Providing First Aid Kit	Provide sharps box for sharp objects	Ranger	As soon as possible	
<u>Tackling ASB and criminal activity</u>	Volunteers	Keeping clear of risk of violence whilst observing and reporting to the Police	N/A	Volunteers	Whenever a volunteer sees such activity	
<u>Volunteers not observing any of the above risk control measures</u>	Volunteers		Volunteers to take personal responsibility for avoiding the briefed risks by measures outlined above	Volunteers	Whenever volunteers do any work in the park	
<u>Trip Hazards</u> (currently exacerbated by weed growth on paths)	Volunteers and the Public	Annual meeting in September with Parks Department officers to report this and other maintenance matters	The Friends can only keep reporting the hazard – the action needs to be taken by the Parks Department	Parks Department	As soon as possible	

More information on managing risk: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/

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