

## **FRIENDS OF RICHMOND GREEN (FoRG) – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018**

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The Annual General Meeting was held at 7:30pm on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in the upstairs room of The Cricketers pub, The Green, Richmond.

Attendance note: In total, **23** people attended the meeting, including the 6 members of the Executive Committee: Vivien Harris (chair), Mark Sebba (Treasurer), Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, Anna Newton Dunn and Linda Christmas.

### **AGENDA**

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of last meeting**
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Report of the Executive**
5. **Financial report and adoption of Accounts**
6. **Election of Officers for 2018-19**
7. **Any Other Business**

## **MINUTES of AGM**

The meeting began at 7.30pm

### **1. Apologies**

Those who sent their apologies for not being able to attend: Nick Coleman; Julian & Nelly Paxton; Sir Brian Fall; Lord Lee.

### **2. Minutes of last meeting**

The Minutes of the 2017 FoRG AGM were agreed:-

Proposed: Mark Sebba

Seconded: Bob Harris

### **3. Matters arising**

None raised.

### **4. Report of the Executive**

A detailed report on key issues and on-going activities is contained in the FoRG Newsletter for April 2018, but in summary the chair noted the following:-

- **Fountain, Greenside:** applications for public funds to help restore the fountain last restored in 1977 are in the pipeline; after an unsuccessful first round application, the bid for funds is now split between a) the Civic Pride fund and b) the second stage of the Village Planning Fund. If successful this time around, any grant received will be enhanced by some of FoRG's own funds.
- **May Fair:** with the return of the Arts Richmond Book Picnic, a full weekend of activities is planned from Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May, with the Fair itself on the Saturday and the Book Picnic's guest on the Sunday being author Barbara Hosking.

- **Valerie Boyes Talk:** a second talk by Valerie Boyes was given in which she focussed on the personalities who had lived around Richmond Green. Anyone attending may have noticed some technical problems, particularly with lighting; this was unfortunate, but the venue’s lighting options were not as “state of the art” as we had been led to believe.
- **Proposed vehicle restrictions, Friars Lane, Water Lane:** shortly before the meeting began came news that the Council had abandoned its proposal to place a 6’6” width restriction at the mouths of both Friars Lane and Water Lane. While aiming to prevent unsuitably large lorries using this route, the Council’s consultation had resulted in “overwhelming” local opposition, both from residents as well as businesses worried about the impact on their own movements.
- **Old Palace Yard resurfacing:** there has been considerable delay in progressing this, with the local consultation needing to be re-run owing to the recent court ruling.
- **Telephone boxes:** split ownership still afflicts this pair of classic red telephone boxes on Greenside, with the Council owning one and the Red Box Company of Brighton owning the other. The latter’s resale asking price of £12,000 has been judged ludicrously high. The Council is still deliberating.
- **Trees on Greenside:** there has been no progress to report, with the Council maintaining that there are no grounds for pruning the plane trees outside of the annual health checks carried out. It’s difficult to retain any optimism about making progress on this issue in the immediate future.
- **Gateway spotlights:** dud bulbs have now been replaced at Gateway and on small number of lamp posts; and various lamp-posts round the Green re-painted where necessary.
- **Road markings:** the Council has promised to permanently remove the rogue right-of-way white markings that can be seen at the junction of King Street and Friars Lane and which have been causing confusion.
- **Litter:** bins around The Green now have lids; views are welcome about whether the litter collecting contractors are doing a good enough job.
- **Rough-sleepers:** some have gone, for now, from the riverside owing to recent high tides.
- **20mph speed limit:** The Green is to be included in a wider proposal to introduce such a limit to calm traffic around the Borough generally.

VH then handed over to Peter Willan to report on Heathrow, Old Deer Park, Licensing and Town Centre issues.

- **Heathrow:** PW: after responding to many consultations and holding meetings with Heathrow, Civil Aviation Authority, NATS and politicians, etc., Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC) continues its work to highlight that fact that Heathrow expansion is not supported by even the governments’ own published evidence. What happens next is difficult to call. Scrutiny by the Transport Select Committee will be followed in the summer by a Parliamentary vote on whether to proceed to the next stage of planning for expansion. Approval would be followed by a three- or four-year planning process encompassing not only a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway but also changes to the way the airspace is used, with flights inevitably more concentrated than before. RHC will continue to challenge the flawed economic arguments that are being deployed to encourage expansion.
- **Old Deer Park:** the future of this public amenity space is subject to much examination and negotiation involving Crown Estates and the Old Deer Park Working Group. The first agreed project to bring improvements will get under way very soon: where Park Lane meets the car park redundant posts are to be removed, resurfacing works and renovation of the entrance gate are to be carried out. There are in all some ten potential projects, including the much needed improvements to the Pools on the Park area.
- **Licensing:** while the newsletter contains much detail about recent applications, this continues to be a difficult battle. However, one major success has occurred very recently. At the licence review in Wimbledon Crown Court, the brewer Young’s agreed to all conditions sought by residents of Church Court and Church Lane in an attempt to mitigate the impact of activity centred on the Angel and Crown pub: there will be no off-sales, windows and doors have to be closed at certain times, and there will be door security at weekends, etc. Other local applications are pending, including one for late opening (till

2am) at 13 Hill Rise (the old Lawson’s antiques shop); this is being challenged as a breach of the Cumulative Impact Policy.

- **Town Centre:** a group of four are working with the Council to bring some practical enhancements to the town, for example the cycle hub behind the railway station. Improvements to Wakefield bus station are also in train, as are moves to overhaul and give consistency to the street furniture and signage around Richmond town. PW: over and above these physical changes, it is obvious to any observer that Richmond town is “changing dramatically.” Local retail is losing out rapidly to the proliferation of food and drink premises, especially the mushrooming number of coffee bars. The fact that this change is part of a national picture does not help us locally in a town where it’s becoming more and more difficult for local retail to survive in the High Street. Change of use applications (from A1-retail to A3-restaurant use, etc.) for newly-acquired premises are on the increase, and the fear is that what inevitably follows in each case would be a bid for an alcohol sales licence. When does a problem become a crisis? Things are not helped by that fact that there are no longer any police based in Richmond town itself. The last two were recently moved to Twickenham and have to be called in by car to deal with any problems reported. So residents can be forgiven for feeling they are unprotected in the way they are entitled to expect.

VH: thanked Peter Willan for the phenomenal amount of detailed and dedicated work he has done, and continues to do, on representing our interests in issues such as those above. The room echoed that note of thanks to Peter.

## **5. Financial report and adoption of Accounts**

FoRG Treasurer Mark Sebba issued the FoRG accounts for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017, summarising as follows:-

- FoRG’s income, which comes totally from filming projects around The Green, is shown as £1,450.
- Expenditure for the year, totalling £841, included items such as a donation to Richmond Museum to support its Old Palace Lane exhibition (£250), AGM costs (£168), and costs associated with the public lecture given by Valerie Boyes (£423); there was no expenditure in this period associated with Richmond Heathrow Campaign.
- With a surplus for this accounting period of £730, FoRG’s balance is shown as £8084.77.
- In addition to this, item 10 in the ‘Notes to the Accounts’ records a post-balance sheet payment to FoRG of £3,000, again from a film company and received in early 2018.
- Overall, therefore, FoRG’s current balance, as of April 2018, stands at approximately £11,000.

MS: given that it would be inappropriate for FoRG to simply continue accumulating its funds without spending on local projects, ways of spending appropriately have been explored. One such project is the ongoing plan to refurbish the Greenside Drinking Fountain. For this, FoRG has pledged £7,000 as a significant contribution to restoration costs that are expected to total around £17,000. Bids for other funds to reach the total cost have been lodged with the Village Planning Fund and also with the Civic Pride Fund. FoRG’s accounts will be open for inspection to comply with both bids.

There were no questions arising from the floor:

FoRG’s Accounts for the period Jan-Dec 2017 were agreed and adopted:-

Proposed: Bob Harris

Seconded: Peter Willan

## **6. Election of Officers**

The current Officers of the FoRG Executive Committee agreed to stand for re-election for the coming year 2018-19. They are:-

- **Vivien Harris** (8 Pembroke Villas) – Chair
- **Mark Sebba** (9 Pembroke Villas) – Treasurer

Proposed: Anna Newton Dunn

Seconded: Bob Harris.

Consequently, in the absence of other nominations, Vivien Harris and Mark Sebba were duly re-elected to continue serving as FoRG's chair and treasurer, respectively, for the coming twelve months.

NB. the position of FoRG Secretary remains vacant for the time being.

The remainder of the committee also agreed to stand for re-election. They are:-

- **Peter Willan** (7 The Green)
- **Peter Griffiths** (26 The Retreat)
- **Anna Newton Dunn** (29 Old Palace Lane)
- **Linda Christmas** (16 Queensberry House)

Proposed: Mark Sebba

Seconded: Bob Harris

Therefore, again in the absence of other nominations, Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, Anna Newton Dunn and Linda Christmas were duly re-elected to continue serving as FoRG committee members for the coming year.

This concluded the formal part of the meeting, with questions/comments now invited from the floor.

## **7. Any Other Business**

**Fountain:** MS made clear that if the refurbishment of the Drinking Fountain at Greenside were to go ahead, as hoped, FoRG is not intending to take any responsibility for restoring a flowing water supply from the fountain. The Council is looking at the possibility of making it a working drinking fountain again, but in doing so there are a range of issues relating to guaranteeing a public health standard that would need to be met. Hence FoRG's commitment to restoring the physical structure but not to providing drinking water from it. AND: regarding timescale of the various bids for funds to progress this project, the Council is due to give consideration to applications in May and we would then expect their decision in August 2018. If successful, the funds granted would need to be put to good use within one year of that decision.

Various questions from the floor then raised issues for discussion.

**Q. Greenside bare earth:** Andrew Morgan asked if there was any point in re-turfing the bare patches under the large plane trees. VH: lack of light is the real issue, and the Council has not shown much interest in dealing with this.

**Q. Friars Lane/King Street blind corner:** Chris Smith of Friars Lane noted the Council's decision to abandon the proposal to install bollards to restrict the size of vehicles allowed into Friars Lane. But, having supported the initiative, CS declared that the initial problem (HGVs using roads far too small for them and causing damage to road surfaces and pavements, etc.) was still a serious issue. In a typical early morning he had personally observed a number (4 in one hour) of very large vehicles making the tight left-hand turn from King Street into Friars Lane, crushing that corner pavement as a result. That corner is also a 'blind' corner and presents dangers just because of that fact. Acknowledging that local businesses need to be serviced, why, he asked, could they not combine their resources to at least reduce the number of HGVs using this route. How could this activity be better co-ordinated? CS: could not the short cut from King Street to Friars Lane be blocked off, or made one way, to prevent HGVs attempting this unsuitable route?

VH: Regarding the blind corner argument, the Council will not allow mirrors to be installed to help safe views; overall, Richmond BID is currently developing a broader initiative to reduce the size of lorries in the whole of Richmond town. But with the room's support, FoRG will raise the problem with the Council and encourage them to consider re-routing traffic at the point where King Street meets The Green and Friars Lane; and request notice saying Friars Lane is not suitable for HGVs.

**Q. Rough-sleepers in Richmond:** Vicky Peirson asked what was being done about the number of rough-sleepers now seen around Richmond, in the High Street, at the Library, on The Green and elsewhere. A distressing issue, but do the various help projects, offering food, etc., simply encourage more homeless people to come to the area? VH: the SPEAR charity continues to work to help people where help is needed in SW London. Whenever rough-sleepers have gathered under the railway arches at Old Deer Park, for example, informing the Council has often resulted in an impressively swift response from SPEAR representatives encouraging people to look for help elsewhere. Regarding police intervention, they have made it clear that doorway recesses in the High Street belong to business premises and are not part of the highway, so their powers are limited if the landlords do nothing. PW: it's a good issue to raise at the forthcoming **Richmond Society Forum** to be held on **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 7.45pm at the Richmond Adult Community College in Parkshot**; PW encouraged people to attend and get involved – the topic of the Forum is the Future of Richmond Town Centre.

**Q. Jamie's Italian restaurant site in King Street:** Vicky Peirson asked if there was any news about what's happening at the premises vacated by Jamie's Italian? There were rumours of nightclub application sent in, although it is understood that it was refused. PW: I'm not aware of any news, but will report back via web site about any applications that may have been made.

**Q. Local policing:** picking up from PW's earlier comments about there being no police based in Richmond town, what of the "new" police station near Richmond Circus. PW: it's being sold off, so there is no longer anywhere to go to speak to police directly in Richmond. We are dependent on phoning them to report a problem. It is noticeable and "very worrying" that when police then arrive by car to deal with, say, an antisocial problem, they don't seem to be trained in ways of effectively handling it. VH: it's said that Richmond BID is actively considering hiring local private security to compensate for the lack of police in protecting businesses on the Green and the riverside. PE: the problem is that private security personnel have no legal powers. PG: there is also the danger of private security people making incidents worse instead of helping to resolve them. PW: if BID is offering money to fund private security, they might be better using that money to fund a local policeman instead.

The meeting ended at 8.44pm.

**END OF FoRG AGM 2018**